SIX LONG POEMS FROM SANGAM TAMIL

N. RAGHUNATHAN

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SIX LONG POEMS FROM SANGAM TAMIL

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We are happy to reproduce once again one of the fine translations of the Tamil classics. This time it is a book of translation into English of six longer poems of Pattu-p-pattu (10 poems). This is an attempt to 'reproduce the idioms, the rhythms and the syntax of languages so alien in its roots and different in its development' for the benefit of the reader of modern English. The translator late Mr.N.Raghunathan was a very versatile scholar and inimitable writer. He was well known for his 'sotto voce' in the Hindu, the most popular English Newspaper in India.

A few attempts have been already made to translate the poems of Pattupattu into English. This translator has done a remarkable job of introducing the general life and culture of the early Tamils. The English rendering of the Tamil poems is very faithful and readable to the optimum level.

The International Institute of Tamil Studies has taken up the unenviable task of reproducing this translation since it is not available now for the users.

We would like to record here that this publication is brought out with the aid of the grants provided by the Directorate of Tamil Development, Govt. of Tamilnadu made available for the best translation of a Tamil classic into English.

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DIRECTOR

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

SANGAM POETRY

The oldest extant literary work in Tamil, according to a view that has long been prevalent, is *Tolkāppiyam*, a treatise on Grammar and Poetics. It is supposed to have been composed during the second Sangam ; whereas the earliest Tamil poetry now available, generally known as Sangam Poetry, is said to have been produced during the period of the third Sangam. ' Sangam ', which may be translated as ' Academy ', was an institution or, rather, three institutions in succession, of which the first two, according to tradition, belong to prehistory. All of them were located in the capital of the Pandyan Kingdom. That capital was shifted from time to time ; old Madurai, the headquarters of the first Sangam, and Kapāta-puram, that of the second, were washed away by the sea during successive deluges, and the third Sangam was located in modern Madurai. The Sangam was a voluntary organization of poets who came together, under the patronage of the Pāndyan Kings, who were great lovers of literature and the fine arts, to discharge such functions as—to give a modern analogy—those which have been the chief concern of the French Academy in Europe, that is, the maintenance of the purity of the language and of literary standards. Admission was by co-option, and later by means of a miraculous contrivance by the Lord Śiva, Who was the permanent President of this august body ; it was a sort of round table, which would give sitting room only to an authentic poet !

Chronology

Some modern scholars, notably the late Mr. Vaiyapuri Pillai, have questioned the correctness of these traditional accounts. Mr. Pillai held[1] that the bulk of Sangam poetry proper was composed before *Tolkāppiyam*, which he would attribute to the 5th Century A.D. However that may be, there is no doubt that *Tolkāppiyam* reveals the existence of a highly developed civilization among the Tamils and a literary sensibility that should have produced literature of a very high order, on which Tolkāppiyar and his predecessors based their

rules. If that literature was really the product of the first two Sangams, it must be presumed to have perished beyond recovery (except for stray quotations in some of the later works). *Tolkāppiyam*, as well as the extant Tamil poetry, which tradition attributes to the poets of the third Sangam, shows that Aryan civilization and culture, the great literature of Samskrit and the work of its grammarians and rhetoricians, were well known and provided stimulus to creative writers in Tamil.

Modern scholarship would confine the term 'Sangam Literature' to those works in verse (prose is of much later origin) that are comprised in the '*Ettu-t-tokai*' ('Eight Collections'), *Pattu-p-pāttu* ('Ten Songs') and *Patinen-kīl-kaṇakku* ('The Eighteen Minor Works'), which are judged to have been produced in that order more or less in the period 150-250 A.D. (Here again Mr. Vaiyapuri Pillai dissents, holding[2] that two of the long poems in *Pattu-p-pāttu* and two of the 'Eight Collections', as well as the entire corpus of the 'Eighteen Minor Works' were later in date, ranging from 600 A.D. to 850 A.D.). The so-called 'Five Epics' (including the well-known *Śila-p-padikāram* ('The Lay of the Anklet'), are assigned much later dates. While the individual poems included in these three groups may be taken to have been produced within the first three centuries of the Christian era, they were very probably collected and arranged in the order in which they are now found, at a much later date. And at least one basis on which the classification into three broad divisions seems to have been made was length. The 'Eight Collections' and the 'Ten Songs' are predominantly secular poetry, whose themes are love and war, known by the technical terms 'akam' ('internal state') and 'puram' ('the external world'); while the 'Eighteen Minor Works' are mostly ethical and didactic in character. The poems in the 'Eight Collections' run from three to thirty-one lines; while in the 'Ten Songs', the shortest poem runs to 103 lines and the longest has 782 lines. The didactic literature, which includes the world-famous *Tiruk-kural*, is mostly in stanzaic form, the stanza having from two to five lines. Some of these works are attributed to a single author, while others, like the *Nāladiyār*, contain the contributions of many poets. This Sangam poetry, as we have it to day, runs to more than thirty

thousand lines. Nearly five hundred poets are mentioned by name as contributors of one or more poems to this corpus. When one remembers that this is probably but a fraction of the actual work produced, and considers its high and manifold excellences, one cannot but be impressed by the extraordinary vitality, variety and richness of the poetic achievement of the old Tamil.

Interpretation

The language is inevitably archaic, though not perhaps more difficult to understand for the modern Tamil that *Beowulf* or even *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight* is for the modern Englishman. But the task is made much easier than it might have been, by the devoted work of a remarkable succession of scholiasts and commentators down the ages. Nacchinārkiniyar, who has commented on a very substantial portion of this literature, and who was by no means the earliest in time of these devoted students, lived in the fifteenth century. He was thus interpreting works which were more than twelve hundred years old by his time. He was a polymath and a man of extraordinary industry as well as an impassioned lover of poetry, and immensely proud of the Tamil heritage. But he was firmly persuaded that all the extant poetry should be interpreted in conformity with Tolkāppiar's rules. Because those rules had been formed, according to the general belief, *before* the extant works came into existence, he assumed that they must have been written in conformity with them. And so, in order to discover what he thought the author really meant, he often resorted to what can only be called juggling with the text (for examples see the Prefaces to and the notes on the individual poems translated in this volume). But if it is remembered that post-Tolkāppiam poets may have occasionally decided to follow their *daemon* in preference to toeing the line to Tolkappiar, even as post-Pāṇini Sanskrit poets were not afraid of going against Pāṇini occasionally, we should be justified in reading the poetry in its most natural order and getting out of it all the aesthetic pleasure it can convey.

'Akam' and the 'Eight Collections'

The rules of *Porul-atikāram*, or the Section dealing with Poetics in the *Tolkāppiyam*, are elaborate enough in all con-

science. As Sangam poetry falls into two broad divisions, 'akam' and 'puram', and as the bulk of the former class is to be found in the 'Eight Collections', the remarks that immediately follow have these poems in mind. They are dealt with at some length here, since they precede the *Pattu-p-pāttu* poems translated in this volume, and some knowledge of them is necessary for a proper appreciation of the longer poems. The old Tamil ideal was to live in close harmony with nature. The object of '*akam*' poetry was to portray man's inner life, especially his experience as lover and husband, who in due course will found a family and be a responsible member of society. This is, so to say, the Tamil way of envisaging the third *purushārtha*—*Kāma*—of the Dharma Śāstra. His attitude to *Artha* as well as to the restraints that Dharma imposes on the pursuit of material well-being, is the real subject of the 'puram' poems; though their ostensible concern is with war. Because the King was primarily the protector of his people, loyalty to him was regarded as a paramount virtue and complementary to patriotism, and the man who fought for his country, prepared to die rather than turn his back on the foe, was the beau ideal. And for King and commoner alike victory in war brought wealth and honour. But manliness was something bigger than martial prowess; a cultivated mind and the good breeding that is the mark of a polite society were as much a *sine qua non* for the fighter as for any other citizen, in the old Tamil country as in Vālmiki's Ayodhyā (see *Ramayana* I-vi-21).

From what has been said above, it will be seen that 'love' and 'war' merely describe in a shorthand way the distinguishing characteristics of the two main divisions of poetry. The subject matter of 'akam' poetry was considered under three aspects: (1) time and place; (2) the features of the exterior landscape, and (3) the emotional states of the hero and the heroine. 'Time' comprehends the division of the year into six seasons, according to the division into 'Ṛtus' in Sanskrit, and the division of the day and night into three parts. 'Place' is concerned with the distinction based on the nature of the terrain, which gives us the five-fold classification of *thiṇai*, which is so conspicuous a feature of Tamil poetry. *Mullai* or forest land, *Kurinchi* or mountainous country, *Pālai* or arid and waterless waste, *Marutam* or fertile agricultural tracts,

and *Neidal* or the sandy sea-coast, had each its special type of poetry, which was required to keep in view its distinctive features. Among these features were the presiding deity of the region, its peculiar foodstuffs, beasts, trees and birds, as well as the war-drum which its armies used, the melody-type, with its appropriate type of *yāzh* etc., which was considered native to the region ; and so on. There were two other *thiṇais* also, *Kaikkilai* (unrequited love) and *Perunthiṇai* (unlawful love), but it is unnecessary to elaborate on these here.

All these special features are comprehended in what I have called the exterior landscape. But the terms *Mullai*, *Kurinchi*, and so on, also stand for the emotional states of the lover and his lady-love. These represent two stages—(i) pre-marital love based on mutual consent to marry, without the knowledge of the woman's parents ; thereupon follows *Kurinchi*, signifying union. This stage finds in due course its consummation in the celebration of the marriage, with the consent of the parents. In the second stage—of love in the married state, or even before marriage, but after union,—separation for necessary purposes would leave the wife or lady love waiting in prayerful expectation of her man's early return ; her state of mind is described as *Mullai*. Finding that he does not come back even after he was due to return, she would pine in grief ; that grief-stricken state was described as *Neidal*. And *Pālai* refers to the grief amounting to despair and fear for the safety of the lover, who has gone on a long journey through perilous country, undergoing great hardships. *Marutam* stands for the equable happiness of married life ; but if it is marred by infidelity—as it might be, since concubinage and harlotry were both prevalent—it might induce jealousy, which also finds expression in poetry. The ' akam ' poet, in describing his lovers in these various emotional states, should be careful not to give him or her a local habitation and a name, since that would mar the idealized portrait of a passion, which is, in truth, the poet's objective. And if his poem has a plot (that is, a story as a setting), he should take care not to introduce into the external landscape any element, bird, beast, flower, etc., that is not native to it, or locate it in any place or time other than what is appropriate to it.

Snapshots of Soulful Moments

It all seems fearfully complicated. But the modern reader, in reading these poems, is rarely made conscious of these conventions, and they hardly detract from his enjoyment. The poets themselves did not apparently feel seriously incommoded. For, if there were many rules, there were exceptions too. Thus, if the regions must never overlap in their poems, the seasons may. And the rule that in 'akam' poems no names must be mentioned, may be relaxed if the poem mixes up 'akam' with 'puram'. Besides, under the heading *turai* or 'minor theme' are listed a large number of permissible sub-topics in regard to each region. And, while it is meticulously laid down when and on what, the hero, the heroine, the companion of either, the foster-mother etc., may appropriately speak, the number of possible *dramatis personae* is so large, and the circumstances in which they may operate are so many that it allows the widest possible scope for invention. The 'akam' poems are, in short, memorable expressions of a soulful moment—a luminous memory, a heightened emotion, or a cry from the heart—lyrical in its intensity and dramatic in its setting.

All these short poems (both of the 'akam' and the 'puram' class) may be properly described as monologues, though they take the form of dialogue or mime in which one of the characters is a silent and passive listener, as happens in some of Theocritus's Pastorals. The old anthologies give in the colophons the names of the poets and the dramatic setting of each piece.

A few examples may be useful. These are taken from three of the anthologies among the 'Eight Collections' which are chiefly concerned with 'akam'. (All the translations are by me). These are *Kurunthogai*, *Ainkuru-nooru* and *Narṟinai*. The following piece by Kapilar in *Kurunthogai* is in the form of a confession by the hero, a Chieftain, to his companion that the cause of his dejection is love :

> It's a wee little highland lass,
> And she lives on the hill with the many-flowered slopes;
> Dainty and soft are her shoulders,
> And her charm like the liquid crystal

Of the mountain brook as it tumbles down
And bubbles from its cavern spout.
And like water, cool and soothing, is that charm
That has vanquished quite my wonted fire.

(*Kurun.* 95)

In another poem in the same collection, attributed to *Yāzh* Brahmadattan (who might be the Aryan King for whose instruction and edification Kapilar wrote the *Kurinchi-p-pāttu*), the lover indulges in light-hearted banter at the expense of a friend who remonstrates against what he regards as a *mesalliance* :

She is the simple daughter of fishermen folk,
Who fish with nets of fine-spun yarn,
With lovely tresses like peacock's "eyes '.
My virgin heart in all innocence
Walked into the net her eyes spread for me.
Beware of those ensnaring eyes—
Believe me, men of worth never lie—
And keep away from that lowly hut
In the enchanted grove !

(*Kurun.* 184)

In cases of clandestine, pre-marital love, it required great tact on the part of the lady's companion to break the unpleasant news to the older folk and make them agree to the marriage of the lovers. In the following poem by Avvai in *Kurunthogai*, the parents, all unconscious of what has happened, consult an old Kurava woman, a soothsayer, as to the likely causes of the heroine's ill-health and low spirits. She attributes it to the displeasure of the gods, and rhapsodizes on the different hills which the Lord Muruga favours. When she comes to sing of the particular hill over which the hero rules, the companion finds here an opportunity to tell the parents indirectly that it is this chief, and no god, who is the cause of her friend's sweet unrest, and she does it skilfully :

Soothsayer, O soothsayer,
Of the long white locks like beads of chank,
Sing that song again, sing, do—
That song in praise of his long hill,
Our noble Chieftain's splendid range !

(*Kurun.* 23)

A young woman and her lover find themselves by chance in the shade of a luxuriant *punnai* tree, an ideal love-tryst as it seems to the lover ; but the girl says, ' No, we will go elsewhere ', for childhood memories come thick upon her, which make it seem almost desecration. This anonymous poem is from *Naṟṟinai* :

As a child playing with my mates on the sea-shore
I buried a *punnai* seed in the white sand
And then forgot all about it.
It sprouted, and I watered it with milk and ghee.
My mother sang its praises : ' 'Tis more beautiful ', said she,
' Than thee, and might well thy younger sister be '.
Ah me ! I would be ashamed to play with thee under its shade.

(*Naṟṟiṇai*, 173)

A young man takes his furtive pleasure with the woman he loves, but shies at marriage. They can meet only occasionally. The girl thus describes her grievous plight to her friend. This poem, in *Kurunthogai*, is by Paraṇar :

Like moss on the water of the drinking well
That disperses when men drink but collects again,
The greenish pallor that overcasts my golden hue
Dissolves at the touch of my love,
But, when he is gone, comes back again.

(*Kuruṉ*. 399)

It is midnight. All the world sleeps, including the mother who is continually girding at her daughter for the clandestine love that is causing scandal. While thankful for this brief respite, the young woman is mortified to find that even her bosom friend sleeps, when she cannot ; and she expostulates with her gently. This poem by Padumanār is from *Kurunthogai*. (The translation follows Mahavidwan R. Raghava Iyengar's interpretation).

I hear the peal of the midnight bell.
The common-sensible have fallen asleep,
Their ire abated for the nonce, for which much thanks !

And so are all that live and breathe in this wide world,
But me and me alone. Why, O why?

(*Kurun.* 6)

A faithless lover, who hops from flower to forbidden flower, (the 'neidal' in the poem stands for harlot) is sought to be defended by the heroine's companion; whereupon the latter retorts caustically (in a poem by Ammoovanār in *Ainkuru-nooru*),

Thou wouldst have me believe
That the lord of the coastal belt,
Where the little white cormorant runs
And ruins *neidal* flower after *neidal* flower
In the salt marshes on the vast sea-shore,
Is a good man. Who, then, is to blame
For my flower-like eyes mantling over with grief?

(*Aink.* 170)

And this is the heart-broken lament of a mother, whose daughter has eloped with her lover, when the search-party returns unsuccessful. This poem is also from *Ainkuru-nooru*, the author being Kapilar:

'This is my doll, this is my own doll!'
So would my daughter cry,
Her lovely forehead puckered with care,
Her eyes full of grief, were she to look at it.
And here is the parrot with which my pretty parrot played.
Has my darling of the flower-like eyes
Gone, leaving me to the endless grief
That stabs the heart every time I look at these?

(*Aink.* 375)

And one last poem from *Kurunthogai*, by Milai Perumkandanār, in which a young woman suffering the anguish of separation mocks at the conventional belief that it is evening-time that brings sorrow to parted lovers. To them all day and night are evening, she says:

They are clods who say
That that alone is evening
When the sun sets in the blood-red sky,

Darkness thickens and the *mullai* blooms,
Bringing sorrow. The bright-eyed dawn that sees
the crested cock
Crow in the great city, and all the livelong day,
Are as much evening to them that grieve,
Parted from their love.

(*Kurun.* 234)

The deep knowledge of the psychology of lovers and the suggestiveness with which emotions are depicted are not an isolated phenomenon of the Tamil-speaking region, but part of the cultural heritage of the country. The *Tolkāppiam* adopts the entire Rasa theory as worked out in the *Nātya Śāstra* of Bharata. That theory finds ample illustration in such works as the Sanskrit *Amaru Śataka* and the Prākṛt collection, the *Gāthā Sapta-Śati*, of Hāla. Most of the Tamil lyrics are essentially of the Subhāshita type, brief, pointed, and pregnant with suggestion. Hāla and Amaru, as much as the Tamil poets, deal with the homely lives of ordinary folk ; and the passions and the intimacies portrayed, while showing refinement, are not marred by sophistication. A poem (No. 2) in *Akanānooru*, for instance, depicts the lady's companion as cautioning the lover against going to the millet field (their usual tryst), because the millet harvest has been gathered, and her parents have redoubled their vigilance. A poem in the *Sapta-Śati* (I. 8) shows the woman resorting to an ingenious expedient for warning her lover, in the presence of her mother-in-law, against going to the field where gingelly was grown, since that crop has been gathered in. ' O mother,' she says, ' Did you hear ? The beautiful lotus-grove, the ornament of our village, has been denuded by the frost, like the harvested gingelly-field ! '

Cultivated Poetry

There is nothing primitive or ' folk ' about this early poetry of the Tamils. It has form and finish. It is cultivated poetry, the work of men many of whom had all the learning of their time at their command, and whose powers were sharpened by constant commerce with their peers, of which the Sangam stood forth as a concrete symbol. Above all, they had the stimulus that only a cultured audience could provide. Some

of them were honoured by great Kings ; others, like Kapilar for instance, rated the friendship of comparatively small Chieftains like Paari more highly than the patronage of the greatest kings, because of their gracious humanity and informed appreciation. It was an aristocracy of the spirit, rather than a hierarchy based on possessions, or even an intellectual elite, that nurtured this poetry. It has been said of the mediaeval troubadours of France, ' Whether dependant or independent, the poets exercised a social influence paralleled by nothing before in the history of mediaeval poetry. They had great privileges of speech and censure, they entered into questions of politics, and above all they created about the ladies of the court an atmosphere of cultivation and amenity which nothing had hitherto approached[3].' That could be said of these Tamil poets too, but with this important reservation that, while Sangam poetry shows extraordinary understanding of the psychology of love and the intricacies of the feminine heart, there is nothing in it of that exaltation of ' courtly love ', which invested the troubadour poetry in its more sophisticated aspects with a painful artificiality.

Perhaps a nearer European analogy would be the poetry of the Minnesingers. Love was the chief theme of their songs, as of the troubadours ', but it was distinguished from the latter, as one critic[4] says, ' by "the direct impress of nature" ' as well as by a remarkable freshness. The following is from a poem by Ulrich Von Liechtenstein[5] :

When with May the air is sweet,
When the forest fair is clad,
All that have a love to meet
Pair in pleasure, lass and lad.

* * *

Sorrow cannot come between
Hearts where love and May are seen.

This joyous bird-note, light and airy, is heard too in the work of the ' Pleiad ' poets—Joachim du Bellay's ' Hymn to the Winds ' and Remy Belleau's ' April ', which Walter Pater praised[6] for ' a certain silvery grace of fancy ', are particularly noteworthy—as also in the lovely lyrics of the Elizabethan

song-writers and the work of some of the later poets like Herrick. In the Sangam poets their freshness, which seems to come from the spring-time of the awakening national consciousness, is nurtured by a loving intimacy with nature; and it shows a directness of vision that expresses itself aptly in the words, simple and few but musical.

'Puram' and Nature Poetry

It is in the shorter lyrics contained in those Anthologies that deal with 'puram' topics that this delight in the sights and sounds of the outer world finds its most copious expression, as do, too, the reflections of the poet on life and on the *purushārthas*. The poetic conventions are considerably relaxed in regard to 'puram' poetry. The specific features of the different regions, such as the symbolic birds and flowers, and the internal states of the human actors, which the 'akam' poet is asked to keep in view, have their counterparts in 'puram'. Thus *vetchi*, the flower that symbolizes the 'puram' aspect, corresponds to *kurinchi* in 'akam' poetry. The characteristic activity denoted by this flower is the carrying off by the Commander of an army, of the cows of the enemy, which he keeps safe. An incident of this character may be portrayed under fourteen *turais* or sub-topics, starting with the noise of the trumpet of the advancing army and ending with the gifting of the cows to the needy. And the offering of worship to Durgā (the Goddess of War) is another feature of *vetchi*.

It is unnecessary for our purpose to go into these intricacies further. For, as has been pointed out already, the conventions, even where they are prescribed for 'puram', sit lightly on the poet. Here again a few examples will help to bring out the chief preoccupations as well as the flavour of 'puram' poetry. Panegyrizing the generous patron and, by implication, fearlessly criticising a niggardly one, is one of the recognised functions of the poet. In the following lines, translated from a poem in *Puranānooru*, Madurai Kumaṇanār rebukes a Chola King who kept him cooling his heels in his antechamber, saying that he (the poet) did not care for the patronage of men like him, who might be great kings that had won splendid victories, but who had 'no heart':

Far greater is he, to my mind, and worthy of my esteem,
Who treats me with due regard and understanding,
Who grows a little rāgi in his narrow glebe
And offers it with the seasoned leaves
Of the sweet-scented *munja* plant
From his thorn-fenced little plot
Where the ram has been munching,
Leaving but little of the succulent leaves.

(*Puram.* 197)

By contrast here is generous praise of a royal patron, a Chola monarch, by Kovur Kizhār in the same collection, who characteristically brings out the King's greatness by describing the flourishing state of his realm. It is put in the mouth of an actor who declares simply, with no self-consciousness, that he never did a stroke of work in his life ; he is one of those children of the Muses who are like the lily of the valley, ' they toil not, neither do they spin ' :

The paddy-fields are fenced with the tall sugar-cane,
And all around are beds of variegated blooms ;
Large herds of cows graze peacefully in the woodlands,
The herdsmen with bows keeping vigil from their huts ;
The fishermen on the beach count the bellying sails,
And the boughs in the *punnai* groves toss over the wave-swept sea.

(*Puram.* 386)

Kapilar, ever sedulous in the praise of his patron and friend, achieves one of his most splendid effects in this brilliant epigram :

The name of Paari is ever on the lips
Of poets wedded to truth, in terms of praise,
As though there were but one giver in the world
And that was Paari—what about the life-giving rain ?

(*Puram.* 107)

A simile is often the very soul of the poem. The poet Poigayār, in this short poem from *Kalavazhi-Nārpadu* (one

of the ' Eighteen Minor Poems ') exults at the splendid effect he has brought off :

> Ah ! how apt is the comparison
> That occurs to me as I think of the day
> When the Lord of the Kāveri took Kazhumalam!
> The umbrella of state that his horses kicked down
> Looked like the mushrooms upturned by the heels of grazing cows.
>
> (*Kal. Nar.* 36)

Urayūr Mudhukannan Śāthanār (in a *Puranānooru* poem) praises the great humility and ability of the Chola King Nalankilli, who ' hides his talent like the elephant hiding in its jaw a stone that it will fling at the enemy ', (*Puram* 30) taking him by surprise. In another poem in the same collection, a royal poet of the Cholas praises the munificence of a subject of his, by saying that the hundreds to whom he gives boiled rice stream out of his house in all directions carrying the food in their hands, ' like ants that issue from their holes with their eggs in their mouths on the eve of the rains ' (*Puram* 173). The following poem deserves to be given in full, because it summarizes a whole philosophy of life—the stoical acceptance of responsibility for one's past as crystallized in the doctrine of *Karma*, reinforcing an instinctive humanism :

> All the world is my home, and all men kin.
> Good and evil hap are not another's doing.
> Neither are pain and the surcease of pain.
> Death is not new. I have never rejoiced
> Thinking that life was sweet ; nor have I railed
> At it as something evil. Having learnt from the wise
> That all life must move duly to its appointed close,
> Like the raft that floats down the great stream
> That began as the cold and tiny drop of water
> From the cloud accompanied by lightning in the sky,
> I do not laud those who loom large in the world's eye,
> Much less do I look down on the humble.
>
> (*Puram.* 192)

Use of imagery

The Sangam poet's extraordinarily acute observation of nature in all its aspects and moods has been referred to more

than once. If we could imagine him as having kept note-book and pencil in his pocket, as some modern poets in the West are known to have done, he could not have accumulated a more copious and ready stock on which to draw at will to illustrate or embellish. Many of the short poems suggest that they were probably prompted by something unusual the poet saw ; he proceeded forthwith to fit it out with the framework of ' akam ' or ' puram ' sentiment that seemed appropriate to it, and the thing was done. Look at this snapshot of a wild pig, which occurs in a Kurinchi poem[7] of twenty-two lines, by Paraṇar (in *Akanānooru*). In it the lady's companion assures her that her lover will not be away for long. The description of the pig takes thirteen lines :

A wild pig with tusk adamant-hard
And bristles like bamboo roots
Drinks at the brimming tarn that looks like the drum's head,
And eats the succulent tubers, like balls of rice,
Of the *śembu* with its broad sapphire-leaves ;
And coming down to a rock that looks like a she-elephant,
It brushes against a white *kūtālam* bush by the side
Of a fountain that flows like a river—the pollen
Of its opening bloom, which resembles a recumbent crane,
Dusting its black side like gold on the touchstone,—
And gets into the millet field and gorges itself,
Then lays itself down to happy slumber.

(*Akam.* 178)

There are nine similes packed in these twelve lines ; it is like one of our old-time brides loaded with jewellery from head to foot ! And all this elaborate description of the pig's itinerary, which is undoubtedly lively, serves only to introduce the fact that the hero is the lord of the land where that pig dwelt ! There are memorable pictures in other literatures, such as that of the spirited steed in *Venus and Adonis* and in Bhavabhūti's *Uttara-Rāma-Charita*, and of the hunted hare, ' Poor Wat ', in the former ; but they do not run like a cinema

reel. They compose like a Landseer painting and are an integral part of the poem. While some of the similes—the comparison of the tarn to a drum's head, and of the opening flower to a sitting crane—are fresh, the others are more or less stale. The 'gold on the touchstone' simile has been used by at least three other poets (see *Kurun.* 192 and *Nar.* 25, which Dr. Varadarajan quotes, as well as *P.P.A.* ll. 220-21). Of course, where the work of about five hundred poets is being considered, it might be wrong as well as hypercritical to object that one poet borrowed from another because they both use the same simile. They may have both been struck by the resemblance. But sometimes the very originality of the observation detracts from the poetic effect, because it might be either untypical or unprecise. Thus, while the comparison of the blossoming sugar-cane flower to a pregnant whipsnake (*Kuruntogai*, 35), and of the white haze of the clouds that overspread the mountain in the early morning to the smoke round the potter's kiln are striking and natural, and the devious ways of scandal-mongers, to the intricate mass of fibres which constitutes the nest of the weaver-bird has a touch of profundity (*Kuruntogai*—374), the comparison of urchins riding a buffalo to monkeys sitting on a block of stone (*Akanānooru*, 206), is merely routine ; and that of the paddy ears falling on the lotus, to the ornament on the forehead of a dancing girl, is artificial and might have been a stray fancy.

In Samskrit poetry, both epic and classical, similes of every kind abound, those that make nature the background for the drama of human life, and those in which the creative imagination delights in nature for its own sake. You have not to go farther than Kālidasa and Vālmīki for brilliant examples of both[8]. But nature, where it is introduced by them into the human scene, is as a rule allotted a subordinate place ; in such a passage as that which describes Bharata's despondency on beholding deserted Ayōdhyā (R-II. cxiv), it is the poignancy of Bharata's feeling that is kept foremost in the reader's mind by the cumulative effect of the comparisons. The Homeric simile (of which examples are to be found in modern epics like Milton's too) has its counterpart in the Sangam poetry ; the simile merely serves as the starting point for a complete little picture, such

as that which the lines on the wild pig above quoted paint. But while the epic, by reason of its scale and the variety of its content, can accommodate that kind of digression without appearing inartistic, insets of this sort do not go naturally into a lyric where the unity and intensity of emotion are all-important. Valmīki brings the names of forty flowers into a dozen lines (see *R.* IV, i. 72-85) but this does not strike us as excessive ; whereas some critics at least have objected to the tally of flowers assembled in *Kurunchi-p-pāttu.*

Pastoral Poetry

Most of the Sangam poets represented in the *Eight Collections* are cameo-painters or workers in intaglio. And they, as well as the authors of the longer poems in *Pattu-p-pāttu,* are writers of pastoral in the true sense ; they might claim kinship with Theocritus. And for the insertion of such vignettes in the pastoral there is precedent. The Greek word for ' idyll ' means ' a little poem '; the Greek idyll was a short poem descriptive of a scene generally of a pastoral character. Theocritus is regarded as the master of that genre, because in the half a dozen pastoral poems he has left he is perfectly natural, and has depicted ' peasants, animals and the countryside with truth and love '[9]. The poet himself and his friends, whom he portrays under thin disguises in these poems, which are in the form of dramatic dialogues in which tuneful shepherds sing in friendly contests, were men of refinement, who lived in cities ; and yet they had no difficulty in unbending to the rustic and imaginatively sharing his joys and sorrows. In the Sangam Age in the Tamil land there was no clear-cut distinction between town and country, rustic and fine gentleman. There were caste distinctions, but the low-caste Paaṇar was welcome to the King's table. And the highest castes contributed as many poets as the others ; all *sahṛdayas* (to use the Sanskrit term for men of taste) were one fraternity. And, though the poets were more sensitive and observant, there was no difficulty in communicating. The people around them were open to the same influence and could see the beauty which the poets saw around them with the wondering eyes of a child.

Pattu-p-pāttu

The longer poems of the *Pattu-p-pāttu* show this pastoral character of Sangam Poetry to a marked degree. Whether it be the love poems or those of the *āṟṟup-padai* class, whether they deal with town or country or with both, whether they are well-knit like the *Kurinchi-p-pāttu*, or a series of pen-pictures, like *Perumbāṇ-āṟṟup-padai*, they all give us vivid and realistic pictures of life as it was lived, life in the raw often, but informed by humour, understanding and compassion. There is rich colour and warmth in them ; compare the first thirty lines of *Pattinap-pālai*, with Andrew Marvell's *The Garden* or Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*. And you hear the music of Spenser's *Shepheards Calendar* in *Kurinchi-p-pāttu*. And if they occasionally show a want of perspective, unduly elaborating what seems to us minor or ancillary, that too is in the pastoral tradition. Thus the detailed description of two different types of *yāzh* in two of the *āṟṟup-padai* poems inevitably invites comparison with the description of the drinking cup in Theocritus's First Idyll, *Thyrsis*. In all these cases the poet dwells lovingly on what he would like us to feel was dear to the singer and so exercised a compulsion on him to give vent to his affection. And his audience, hearing him dilate on the magnificence of the queen's apartment in *Nedu-nal-vādai*, and of the King's camp in *Mullaī-p-pāttu*, must have been attracted as much by the novelty of the thing described as by the beauty of the poetry.

In this respect these old poems have what may be properly called the epic leisureliness. Tamil was to find its great epic poet in Kamban much later. The five ' Perum-kāppiangal ' (' Mahā-kāvyas ', or ' Court epics ', to use the term applied to their Sanskrit counterparts), and ' *Perum-kādai* ' (based on the Udayana legend) were the first productions to use a regular plot as the ground-work. But in the *Pattu-p-pāttu* we find the first attempts to shape a long poem by organizing material of the most varied but congruent kind round a central theme, the glories of Madurai and the Pāndyans in *Madurai-k-kānchi*, for instance, the prowess of a great hero like Karikāla in *Pattinap-pālai*, or the love at first sight that is celebrated in *Kurinchi-p-pāttu* with all circumstance. The

dramatic element is still there, in the way in which each new scene is ushered in and the significant details are high-lighted. But the succession of scenes evolves into a story of sorts, which holds our attention by reason of the unity of its major theme and predominant sentiment as much as by the vividness of detail and sensuous charm.

The syntactical structure of a long poem is, necessarily, more complex and ramified than that of a lyric of a few lines. In this respect the *Pattu-p-pāttu* poems show considerable advance on the early lyrics. But sentence-structure and paragraph organization are still inchoate. It has been said that the *Mullai-p-pāttu* of 103 lines has but one finite verb. And *Nedu-nal-vādai*, with its 181 lines, has but one subject proper, and that is in the last line ! The rather awkward device called *māttu* (for which see the Notes on *Mullai-p-pāttu*) is resorted to, to indicate the broad divisions of the poem. *Mullai-p-pāttu* and *Nedu-nal-vādai* may be analysed into three verse paragraphs each, if we follow the meaning, while the grammatical structure is monolithic.

Metre

The metrical form of these poems is the *Akaval*. The rules of Tamil prosody as laid down in *Tolkappiyam* are very elaborate. Tamil verse is based on quantity like Sanskrit and Greek, and not on stress. The long poems translated in this book are in the main in the metre called *Āśiriappā*. This consists of four feet, each containing two syllables. In some of the poems, notably *Pattina-p-pālai*, another metre, *Vanji-p-pā*, is also employed. This is a shorter line, consisting of two feet with three syllables each. And Tamil poetry relies much for its musical effect on alliteration, assonance, and to some extent on internal rhyme, though these features are less pronounced in Sangam poetry than in the later verse. It should be remembered that all the old poetry was chanted by the poets and the minstrels, though only two collections, the *Paripādal* and *Kalit-togai* were set to music, according to the rules of *Iśai-t-tamizh* or song-poetry.

This Translation

And now something must be said about the principles on which the present translation is based. The aim has been to give an idiomatic and faithful rendering of the poems, while trying as far as possible to convey too something of their flavour and poetic charm, an integral part of which is the verbal music. Blank verse is the English metre that comes nearest to the metre of the original. There is a certain briskness about the flow of the Tamil verse, partly due to the fact that the lines are usually end-stopped. It often seems as if the poet was intent on delivering his whole meaning in one breath. And the shorter metre, the *vanji-p-pā*, goes with a swing like a tripping dance measure. The longer line is however longer than its English analogue. I have therefore employed a modified blank verse (if such a description may be permitted) by using six stresses to a line as a rule, and often seven, while five occur less frequently ; and by a liberal admixture of dactyls I have sought to impart quickness of movement, I have also sought as far as possible not to exceed the length of the original. (While the six translated poems run to 1670 lines in the original, the translation exceeds this by only a hundred lines). This was necessary to show how terse as a rule the old poets were. But compactness has not been sought to be achieved in the translation by taking liberties with syntax. It was this consideration as well as the desire to achieve a rhythm that would not sound *outre* to ears attuned to English verse that induced me to resort to lines of varying lengths.

Sir Arthur Waley's translations from the Chinese have been justly acclaimed for the virtuosity shown in adopting a form of verse that retained enough of the structure of the original measure to convey to the English reader some idea of its quality. Most of the lines in his translations seem self-contained and autonomous. That perhaps reflects the texture of Chinese poetry, in which eloquent silences seem to punctuate the laconic, expressed thought. To my mind that kind of thing is not possible in dealing with Tamil, especially with these long poems that are so organically and tautly bound, in spite of the line being usually end-stopped. The Miltonic

verse paragraph is, therefore, the basic division-principle adopted in these translations.

There has been considerable difference in the interpretation of obscure passages in these poems, which occur every now and then. The line of cleavage has generally been between the old commentator Nachinārkiniyar and his modern disciples, and those who prefer to exercise their independent judgment. In such cases the translator must needs follow what seems to him the more natural interpretation. In the Notes I have drawn attention to the more important passages where such crucial differences have arisen and indicated which side I follow. I hope the Notes will also be found useful by those who are unfamiliar with the Tamil country and the history and traditions of the people.

REFERENCES

1. For Vaiyapuri Pillai's views on Chronology see his three collections of Tamil essays, *Kāvya-Kālam*, *Ilakkia Deepam* and *Ilakkia Manimālai*.
2. See the essay on *Pattu-p-pāttu* in one of the books mentioned above.
3. Article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.
4. From *An Anthology of World Poetry*, edited by Mark Van Doren.
5. The translation of the poem is by Jethro Bethel; it appears in the same Anthology.
6. See Walter Pater's essay on Joachim du Bellay in *The Renaissance*.
7. This, and the other poems referred to in this paragraph, are all dealt with by the late Dr. M. Varadarajan in his book, *The Treatment of Nature in Sangam Literature*, a mine of information on the subject, to which I am indebted for these references.
8. See the description of spring on the banks of the Pampā (R. III. lxxv), of Hemanta on the banks of the Godavari (R. III. xvi) and Rama's feeling description of the desolation in his heart when the rains find him separated from Sita, and of his frustration when autumn has come without Sugriva.
9. The Oxford Classical Dictionary.

MULLAI-P-PĀTTU

This is the shortest of the ten poems included in the collection known as the *Pattu-p-pāttu*, running to only 103 lines. It belongs to the genre (thiṇai) called *Mullai*, dealing with the emotional state of a loving couple separated by some urgent necessity, such as a just war that honour or profit might require the husband to undertake. He goes assuring his wife that he would return before the rains set in, which is normally the season for the fireside and domestic happiness. With much fortitude, the faithful wife nerves herself to this temporary parting; the nearer the appointed time for reunion the greater is the eagerness of expectation and tenseness of anxiety she shows. He may be supposed to be equally eager, but as a male with responsibilities, he must not give way to weakness. The obedient wife, while striving her best to keep her emotions under control, suffers in silence. It is the hopes and fears of such a wife that are depicted with deep discernment and delicacy of touch in this poem, through the eyes of a sympathetic onlooker, perhaps one of her women attendants. She is a woman of quality, apparently the wife of a ruling Chieftain; though, in accordance with the convention governing 'akam' poems, the hero and heroine are not mentioned by name or identified as individuals. The eight anthologies of shorter poems in Sangam literature contain a number of pieces of the *mullai* type. But *Mullai-p-pāttu*, apart from being the longest of the class, is rightly regarded as the best, and as a model of its kind.

The whole 'action' of the poem occurs within twenty-four hours more or less. It falls into three scenes. The first twenty-four lines depict the dejection of the heroine. The attempts of her attendants to cheer her up by taking the omens and returning with the assurance that they were favourable, and that the hero would be returning immediately, having successfully concluded the campaign, fail to reassure her.

The scene then shifts to the armed camp, which is elaborately described (ll. 25-84). The hero spends a sleepless night, planning the decisive battle, which is fought on the morrow. His thoughts are all for the loyal fighters who have fallen on

the field and for his horses and elephants suffering from the wounds inflicted by the enemy. When the morrow brings victory, he lies down for a brief nap.

And the scene shifts again to his palace at home and his queen. Listening to the patter of rain, she lies in a state of semi-reverie in which she has remained ever since she heard the augurs. ' But him she sees not ' (1.85), says the poet ; thus linking it with ' But she would not see ' (1.24), and deftly indicating that her agitation dominates the whole poem like an unseen presence, though it is explicitly described only in half a dozen lines (ll. 85-90). She may not ' see ' her husband's victory. But that is paradoxically due to the fact that her mind is so completely absorbed in him that she has simply no thought for such things ;

. . . . . her grief's too great to bear
Without her mind's support ; and that's gone after him.

Vālmīki said of Sita in duress, ' She saw neither the *ashok* garden where she sat nor the Rakshasis crowding round her, she saw only Rama, and she lived for him '. That is the state of mind of the anonymous heroine of this poem. And from her reverie she awakes to the sudden realization that her husband, all eagerness to join her now that duty is discharged, is rushing home, the neighing of his horses heralding his approach. The last few lines that describe this swift transition, both in the mental and the outward world, are a marvel of suggestiveness ; as the passage reflecting the faithful wife's unspoken thoughts reveals an unerring psychology.

The old commentator Nachinārkiniyar, from the mistaken desire to make the poem conform willy-nilly to the conventions of *akam* poetry, interprets it very arbitrarily ; thus from lines 81-84 he jumps back to line 23, then to l. 11, and thus he goes back and forth like the weaver's shuttle. Because the heroine in a *mullai* poem should show no outward sign of grief but conduct herself like ' patient Griselde ', he tries to make out that all the mental distress of the heroine, described in the poem, had been experienced by her when her husband first decided that he must go out on this expedition. The old women's ascertaining of the omens, as well as the consultation of the augurs by the Commander-in-chief (see note on l. 19)

had, according to N, been done *before* the Chief's departure, and he had, lying by her side at night, spoken to her persuasively and succeeded in quieting her fears. Apart from the fact that the poem would lose much of its charm, thus read, the too literal interpretation of the *akam* convention ignores the fact that an emotion might be not the less deep because it does not show itself outwardly, owing to habitual self-control. The poet has shown himself a far better psychologist.

Not all critics of Nacchinarkiniyar are, however, agreed on their interpretation of the poem. Marai Malai Adigal, in his disquisition on the subject, Mr. T. P. Meenakshisundaran in his *Mullaip-pāttu*, a fine piece of research, and Tiru T. P. V. Somasundaranar, Editor of the poem in the *Pattu-p-pāttu* series published by the Tirunelveli South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, all offer radically different interpretations. I have as a rule followed the last critic in regard to the more important points of difference.

Some modern critics have found fault with the over-elaboration of the description of the King's camp and especially of his bedroom. I have dealt with this matter at some length in the General Introduction ; I will only add here that the Sangam poet, like the child of Stevenson's poem, delighted in the fact that ' the world is full of a number of things ', and in lovingly recounting them with minute particularity. Though, as convention required, we are not told which King or Chief it was who thus fought and won, the description of the camp was obviously based on first-hand knowledge of one such camp. And the poet Nappūtanār, of whom we know little more than that he was of the Vaisya community and the son of a man who was in the gold trade at Kāveri-p-pattinam, had evidently had opportunities of observing such a campaign (perhaps as the bard-protege of the King) and introduced it in his poem with a few idealistic touches. Mr. Vaiyapuri Pillai regards this poem as being much later in date than any of the others included in the *Pattu-p-pāttu* collection except *Tiru-murugāṟṟuppadai.*

WAITING

AS the Great God[1], Whose mighty arm enfolds
The Mother of Plenty[2], towered[3] o'er the wide earth
Bestriding it, when on His palm with conch and discus marked
The water fell,[4] so on a dreary eve a cloud
That of the cold loud sea had drunk, and wheeling right
A mountain-peak o'erhung, swooped down with cruel speed
On the bowed earth[5] in a great blast of rain.
Then[6] to the purlieus of an old, well-guarded city came
Dames of great age who, with a measure of paddy grain,
Scattered the fragrant *mullai*[7] buds just opened—
Which brought the honey-bees humming sweet as the *yāzh*[8]—
Made worship with their hands and waited for Heaven's word.[9]
A little shepherd lass, hugging her shivering shoulders,
Called to the fretting younglings turning round and round,
Tied by the leg to their short tether ropes,
'Your mothers will be here presently; they come,
Driven before the herdsman with his cruel stick.'
'We heard those words of good omen, and by them know,
As by those the wise men[10] heard, that our liege lord,
With tribute levied on the foeman's captured land,
Is coming, his work done; cease thy anxious grieving,
O lady fair as the mango blossom'.[11]
But she would not see; and the tears strayed like pearls
From the flower-like, turbid kohl-fed eyes.

In a long stretch of jungle,[12] girt by a wild stream,
Cleared of far-smelling *pidavu*[13] and brushwood green,
The foeman's low-doored hunters' watch-posts have been razed,
And ringed in with a fence of wild thorn, rampart-like,
Rises an armed camp wide as the sounding sea.
Where four streets meet, with their leaf-covered huts in line,
Stands on guard the small-eyed elephant in rut,

Its jowl dripping ichor ; it will not eat the sheaves
Of field-grown paddy trussed with the tall cane,
Nor the sweet liquorice, but with them mops its front,
Resting its trunk on its pointed tusk, the while
Unlettered youngsters prod it with the forked goad,
Urging it, with words of a Northern tongue,[14] to feed.

Inside a tent of ropes made fast on poles,
Are stood on end in rows, with quivers hung on top,
Like the ochre-dyed cloth of the Brahmana ascetic
On his triple rod, strong bows that had never fled
From a just war, and lance-heads with flower-designs,
And shields close-joined ; with no fortress but their bent bows,
Lie large bands here of fighters speaking different tongues.[15]
A chamber for the King, apart, by common will enclosed,
With parti-coloured curtains on tall uprights held ;
Young girls, with bracelets on their forearms, and their hair
Waving on lovely napes, hold in their tight-laced breast-bands
Stout-hilted, gleaming daggers that make night day ;
With spouted cans of *ghee* they move, laying long wicks,
Relighting [16] dying lamps in sculptured maidens' hands.
'Tis midnight ; the noise of the long-tongued shining bells
Has died down ; as in the spray-laden breeze
Sway the small shrubs covered with waving creepers
Of the wild jasmine in bloom, so move the King's guard,
Old upright men in white, with turbaned heads, nodding slightly,
Drowsy but in duty staunch. The simple men[17] and true,
Who read the time correctly, lift up their hands in praise
And tell the King, ' Lord, who farest forth to quell
Thy foes on the planet girt by the wave-tossed sea,
Thus much of time is past, by thy near-empty glass.'[18]
Jacketed Ionians with tight-fitting breeches
Bulging at the hip, where the coiled horse-whip's hid,
Stalwart and fierce and proud of mien, have made
With tiger-chains[19] and a screen slung round on cord
An inner apartment fair for the King's bed,
Glowing with crystal lamps. Tunicked barbarians[20] dumb

Stand guard without, who speak with eyes and face, not tongue.

The King gets no sleep, eager to pounce on the foe.
He thinks of his bull-elephants, with their festering wounds
From enemy javelin, unmindful of their mates ;
Of his fighters who, having sheared thick elephant trunks
That writhed like snakes, and secured goodly victory
For their *vanji*[21] wreaths exuding honey, had paid
The debt of red rice[22] with their lives ; of horses standing,
Ears slumped, their grass untouched, sore stricken,
With enemy arrow-thrusts in flank, past leathern guard.
[23]Resting one arm on his bed, the other joining
Its braclet to his crown, he remains long in thought.
On the morrow, his strong hand, closed on weapons
That seek the foe, brings him a mighty victory
For the *vanji* wreath to vaunt his lasting fame.
And then he lays him down to sleep, as the camp resounds
To the victorious drum, and the foe quakes where he lies.

But him she sees not, and her grief's too great to bear
Without her mind's support—and that's gone after him.
And then she ponders long and, reassured, puts back
Her slipping bangles ;[24] but seized with sadness still,
Heaves a deep sigh, and like the peacock arrow-struck,
Shivers, and her ornaments slip again.
In her seven-storied mansion, all gold and gem,
Bright with the blazing lamp in golden maiden's hand,
Beguiling her mind with the music various
Of the rills of rain-water running down the eves,
She lies—and as she waits there falls on her intent ear
The distant noise of horses neighing. With an army huge
That had, smiting, seized the enemy's cherished land.
And hoist the victorious flag, as conch and trumpet blared,
Along the red-loam highway, through the fertile woods,
Where in the fine sand the close-leaved *kāyā*[25] blooms
Collyrium-black, and cassia with its shoots and jets
Rains golden spray, and the furled white *kāndal* buds
Open like the spread palm, and clustered *kāndal* red

Splashes blood—through the waving rain-fed rāgi corn
Where the buck with the twisted horn bounds with the timid doe,
While the white clouds scud past with their promise of rain
And the ripening sweet potato woods recede—
On that early day of Āshādh[26] he hastes on,
Spurring the flying steeds of his lofty, shining car.

NOTES

1. Vishnu, the second member of the Hindu Trinity.
2. Vishnu's Consort, the Goddess Lakshmi, Who confers prosperity and Who is ensconced on His breast.
3. The allusion is to Vishnu's incarnation as Vāmana-Trivikrama. When the gods had been ousted from heaven by the *asuras*, Vishnu was born as a dwarf (Vāmana) to the patriarch Kaśyapa. He went to the sacrifice that was being offered by Bali, the ruler of the *asuras*, and begged of him three feet of earth. Bali was amazed at his lack of worldly wisdom, but granted the boy his wish. The moment he poured water on his (Vāmana's) hand in token of the grant, the disguised Vishnu stood towering over the earth; measuring it with one stride, covering the upper air and heaven with another, He asked Bali where He should plant His foot for the third time. Thus Bali was humbled and ousted. The point of the comparison here is that the cloud, when it went to the sea for water was a small one, but the moment it got it, it soared up into the sky. This is a favourite allusion with the Sangam poets.
4. The old fifteenth century commentator (Nachinārkiniyar) would render this as ' whose hands hold the right-whorled conch and discus.'
5. *Lit.* ' enveloping the earth '.
6. See the Prefatory Note for a basic difference in interpretation of the whole poem, favoured by N.
7. The fragrant white jasmine that blossoms in the evening. It is the characteristic flower of the pasture-land and forest regions, which are also known by the same name.
8. Stringed musical instrument (often rendered as ' lute '), of which a number of varieties are mentioned in old Tamil literature.
9. This mode of ' taking the augurs ', which consisted in prayerfully listening to the chance remark of a passing stranger and interpreting it as heaven's oracle, is still prevalent with variations.
10. Men skilled in consulting the augurs, who were sent by the orders of the Commander of the forces before the King set out on his expedition.
11. N. would render, ' O lady complexioned like the defibred lily stalk '. The lexica translate variously as ' black ', ' beautiful ', and so on.
12. The old kingdoms had four defences, one behind the other—water, land, mountain and jungle ; the last was occupied by hunter-watchmen living in small strongly built posts.
13. Wild shrub bearing fragrant white flowers.

14. Such as 'appudu, appudu, ādu, ādu, ai ai' (N.); apparently corrupt forms of some North Indian dialect.

15. Apparently including mercenaries, as will be seen from the later reference to Ionians and barbarians.

16. N. in a different interpretation suggests that the re-lighting of lamps that had gone out was the work of others, who were menials. In 1. 48, I have translated ' kacchu ' as ' breast-bands ', following Mr. T. P. Meenakshisundaran.

17. N. gives a different meaning, whose relevance here, however, is not apparent.

18. The Indian equivalent of the hour-glass, using water instead of sand.

19. This is nowhere explained ; probably the chain was made of linked parts in the likeness of the tiger.

20. ' Foreigners ' (corresponding to the Skt. *mlecchа* and the Greek *barbaroi*).

21. The wreath of *vanji* flowers is worn by the King or Commander who invades another's country and is itself the outward symbol of his intention.

22. Red rice was a superior kind of rice which was much prized. The master, who was ' the provider of food ', was regarded as a benefactor for whom one should sacrifice one's life if need be.

23. Lines 78 to 84 correspond to lines 77 to 80 in the original, which are interpreted vary differently by N., following the initial bias referred to in the note on 1. 8.

24. The bangles slip because she has grown thin with grief and longing.

25. For *vanji*, *kāyā*, *kāndal* etc., see Glossary.

26. Āshādh (July-August) is the first of the two rainy months according to the Indian scheme of the six seasons. It is on the first day of that month that Kalidasa's Yaksha nostalgically addresses the cloud with a request to carry a message from him to his wife, who pines in separation in far-off Alakā.

KURINCHI-P-PĀTTU

This poem, which runs to 261 lines in the original, is the work of the Brahmana Kapilar, who along with Paraṇar is regarded as in the front rank of the Sangam poets. His name is famous for other reasons as well. He was the bosom friend of Paari, ruler of a small tract of land, but a great and munificent patron of talent ; the old Tamil country cherished the names of such ' Vallals ' (philanthropists) as one of its chief titles to glory, and Paari was the foremost of them. He was defeated and killed in a battle in which the powerful rulers of the Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms were ranged against him. He left two daughters, of whom Kapilar took charge. He spent long and anxious days trying to get suitable matches for them, and when that self-imposed task was finished to his satisfaction, threw himself into the fire (according to tradition), saying that a world without Paari was not worth living in.

It is stated that he composed the *Kurinchi-p-pāttu* expressly for demonstrating to ' Brihattan, an Āryan King,' the beauty and finer points of Tamil culture. (That King, incidentally, learnt Tamil so well that he is remembered as a poet in his own right). Whatever the truth about this story of its origin, there is no doubt that the poet consciously fashioned it as a model of its kind. *Kurinchi*, one of the five ' thiṇai's ', deals with the emotional state of love at first sight, which leads to the union of lovers and, after the usual trials and tribulations, to happy marriage. In accordance with the *akam* convention, we are told nothing about the two lovers here except that they were both high-born, the young man being in fact the ruler of the mountain tract in which the maid, herself the daughter of a petty chieftain, lived. It is her companion who narrates to her foster-mother how they came to meet and how the liaison developed and seeks to secure her sympathy and support for the lovers, so that the union might be consumated by marriage.

The companion reveals herself as an accomplished advocate. She shows how, set to the task of watching the ripening corn fields and shooing off the birds, she and her great friend

enjoyed themselves, bathing in the mountain-tarn fed by the tumbling brook, arraying themselves in a costume of leaves and gathering an extraordinary number of flowers which they found on the hill-side, revelling in their colour and fragrance. They were in that state of exaltation which, with the quick succession of the emotion-charged events that followed—the appearance of the hunting hounds, closely followed by their owner, and the panic caused by the invasion of the elephant in rut—helped the romantic mood to crystallize in a sudden impulse of love when the right man appeared at the right hour.

While the heroine has all the modesty of a well-brought-up girl, she instinctively exercises her charm and puts up no serious defence against the skilled approach of one who is young, handsome and dressed and decked in the mode, and whom she recognises as being one of her own class. But if there is sophistication in his address (note that sly, knowing smile directed at the companion), there is also remarkable delicacy of feeling in the words in which he addresses her to win her trust. He persuades her that he is moved not merely by physical attraction but by a deep conviction that she would be an ideal helpmeet in the voyage of life. And though the courtship is long and chequered, the poet manages to convey the impression that their love did not sin against the standards of their time and class. ' Kaḷaviyal '—clandestine, pre-marital love—had its counterpart in the Gāndharva mode, one of the eight forms of marriage recognised by the Dharma Sastra.

The deep affinity between nature and man in the pre-industrial age was, for the old Tamil, reinforced by a peculiar regard for the *genius loci*, which was stylized in the concept of *thiṇai*. There is nothing of the pathetic fallacy about this feeling of instinctive rapport. Kapilar's triumph lies in showing how the innocent hearts of the young girls genially expand in the sunshine on the hills with the glancing brook and the peaceful, inviting tarn, the flower-tinted shade of trees, the orchestra of bird-notes, and their own long-drawn musical cries which, ostensibly intended to frighten the birds off, are really inspired by a deep harmony in the soul. The sudden fright caused by the appearance of the dogs and of the elephant add but spice to the savour of life and make the blood course

quicker in their veins. It is a memorable picture of nature as spoil-sport that Kapilar paints when he depicts evening coming like an angry King. But it invokes no rebellious feeling in the lovers' hearts ; it is accepted as part of the natural order, for it is the time for rest and renewal. Nature has another side to it ; we are not allowed to forget that it is red in tooth and claw. The hill-side may be owned by the King, but is as full of menace for him when the sun sets as for other mortals ; and these are as realistically described as the smiling beauty of a sunny day. But it is the timorous maid that is harrowed by these apprehensions, on behalf of her lover, not the lover himself who, constant, patient and high-minded, counts no risk too great that can give him an hour of bliss with her.

The poet paints extraordinarily vivid pictures of full-blooded life exhibiting itself in all its varied moods—the angry hounds as a foil to the winsome way of their owner, the drink-fuddled watchman, the elephant on the rampage. No less vivid and true are the comparatively rare similes, such as the comparison of the ripe ears of millet to the disappointed elephant's dejectedly hanging its tired trunk on its tusk. Of the 'implied simile'—which, according to the canons of Tamil poetics, may be made by the subtle art of the poet to invest with significance for the human actors selected features of the environment—we have two examples in lines 210 to 218. While this may seem fanciful to those not bred in this cultural tradition, the sensitive reader, whatever his background, will recognise how well the unity of sentiment is sustained. As prayerful waiting is the key-note of *Mullai-p-pāttu*, so is the urge for fulfilment here. It is the spring-time of life flowering in love. The riot of colour and odour brought by the long catalogue of flowers before the mind of the reader, who knows the Indian countryside in the Kāveri and the Vaigai basins, may strike some readers as an irrelevance ; some Tamils themselves, sticklers for the rules of *Tolkāppiam*, have pointed out that not all the 'flowers' included here are flowers really, and that some of them are not natives of the Kurinchi region. But the mere recital of their names sounded in the ears of the romance-filled girls like a litany. You can find in Shakespeare, as in the Greek and Latin poets, similar catalogues of flowers (though not as long) which the foreigner relishes for the music they make in the ear, though he may have seen none of them.

THE WAY OF A MAN WITH A MAID

Mother,[1] may thou prosper, O mother, listen.
To know what grievous ailment grips my bosom friend,
Her of the shining forehead and copious silk-soft hair,
Making her gorgeous robes and splendid ornaments
Sit loose on her limbs, defying the physic art,
Thou hast called in men skilled in divination[2]
And praised the One God[3] seen in His many forms,
Sung Him and bowed to the ground, scattered many-hued flowers,
Sandal and incense offered ; but nought availing,
Her illness still obscure, thou grievest as she does,
Confused and sick at heart. That stubborn, cruel sickness,
Rooted in the heart, despoiling her fair looks,
Wasting her fragrant shoulders, making the looseness
Of her armlets visible,[4] feeding her secret grief,
I have discovered, making her talk, by my skill in speech.

' " [5]If jewels made of pearl and gems and gold,
Well-set in fair proportions, should be broken,
They can be mended ; but if the ancient virtues,
And self-control, and conduct worthy of our line
Should be tarnished, 'tis not easy to wash the stain,
Restoring the pristine glory, even for those
Exalted souls, delusion-free, who see the Truth "—
So say the knowers of ancient lore. Should I tell mother,
" Thy anxious love[6] and my own sense of shame
Both failing, we escaped the lynx-eyed watch
Of my father, him of the lofty car,
And came together in secret love ", that sure should bring
Me praise,[7] not blame ; but if they still will baulk my wish,[8]
Why, then, I'll live with my grief till in death we meet.'
So saying, sobbed she helpless, turbid her gazelle eyes,
Sore-stricken ; and I, like the wise man who would make
Peace between two hostile kings and powerful, grieve
Caught betwixt fear of thy wrath and her plight.
' Should we give this girl to that man, will all be well ?
In family, means and quality are they well matched ? '

—These things unconsidered, acting all by ourselves
We[9] ventured on this extraordinary thing
That saved a life ; let me tell how it happened,
So thou wilt see it had to—spare me thy wrath.

'Like the trunk the elephant hangs on its pearl-filled tusk,[10]
Having with craning neck tried hard and failed to get
The rice[11] within the bamboo tall, lie the bent ears
Of tufted millet, thick and ripe, depending from their stalks.
Go, shoo away the parrots that swoop on them, and come
At sundown', saidst thou, sending us. We clambered
Into the loft that the night-watchman had built,
To scare tigers, on the top of the dense-leaved tree
That buzzed with the chatter of birds, and taking turns
Plied the rattle woven fine, of cane from the hill,
The drum,[12] and the twanging bow that frights the parrots.

At midday, blazing hot under the sun's massed rays,
We played in the lovely lucent stream of crystal water,
Sparkling like silver gauze, that leaps down from the top
Of our chieftain's hill,—where the cloud that had drunk so full
That the dark, water-filled sea was diminished,
And soared into the sky, its placid motion broken,
Trumpeting sonorously, joined by the fleet wind,
So the birds of the air, affrighted, sank into their nests,
Poured out great torrents of rain on the hill-side,
Sheathed with lightning that glanced like the leaf-blade
Of the spear that the God-child,[13] gaily decked,
Grasps in His hand, along with the kettle-drum,
To destroy the foe—and with pleasure insatiate
And unceasing sport, plunged into the wide tarn
Of liquid crystal, singing as the fancy moved us,
To the folded mountain's echo, then drained and dried
Our jet-black, plaited hair that hung low down our backs[14]
Like sapphire set in gold, and our eyes were red.

The large-petalled bright red November-flower,[15]
Āmbal and *anicha*, and red lily cool from the pond,
Kurinchi[16] and *vetchi* and the rose-red hedgerow flower,
Sweet mango, *śem-mani* and the bunched blooms,
With a smell of their own, of the big bamboo cane,
The *bel* flower and the flame-like *eruzha*,
Milk-weed and *kūviram*, *vata-vanam* and *vāhai*,
The white *kutaja* blooms and the flowering sedge,
The creeper *śeruvilai*, and *karuvilai*, sapphire-blue,
Palm-shoot and bishop's weed and many-petalled *kurava*,
Green-leaf, *bakula* and clustered *kāyā*,
Āvirai opened wide, small bamboo and rattan,
The wild liquorice and Indian coral,
Myrtle and *kōngam* and the *manjādi* flower,
Tilak and trumpet flower, honey-scented *śerundi*,
Atiral and *champak*, big and cool, sweet basil,
Wild jasmine, and the mango's sweet-smelling copious shoots,
Thillai, and iron-wood, and *mullai* of the rocks,
Ganjā and *pidava* and red ebony,
Plantain and *valli*, *neidal* long and sweet,
The spathe of the cocoanut, and *mullai* red,
Prickly-stalked lotus, saffron and wild jasmine,
Cool and sweet-scented *kokudi*, *pārijāta*,
Jasmine and *śen-kurali* and the white gloriosa,
Screw-pine and scented *śurap-punnai*, pollen-rich,
Kānji and the honey-sweet clusters of blue lily,
Pāngar and white *kadambu*, bunched *thaṇakka*,
Inda and silk-cotton and the drooping cassia,
Adumbu, and bauhinia, long-vined *avarai*,
Convolvulus and *palāsh* and thick-clustered *ashok*,
Vanji and *bhittika* and *sindhuvāra*.
Thumbai and the sacred basil, flame-like *kāndal*,
Nandi and *narava* and scented *punnāga*,
Cotton and sponge-gourd, green thistle, sandal,
Eaglewood, big *punnai*, citron and rose-apple,
Irulvāsi, *vēngai*, *kurunda*, big and black—
These and a hundred other blooms we plucked, wandering long,

With the *puzhagu*, large and lovely, like spread lac,
For, faint with pleasure at their beauty and fragrance,
We had fallen in love with them.
On the wide rain-washed rock
We heaped the flowers, and from the millet field that lay
On the folded mountain with its deep orchestra
Of bird-notes, shooed the parrots off with shouts long-drawn,
Of deep-toned syllables[17] clear ; and screened with leaves,
Plucked and trimmed and strung together, our hips
Wide as the serpent's hood, and gracefully bound,
With lovely strands of many-hued flowers, our soft black locks,
And sate in the cool flower-dusted shade
Of the *ashok* with its beautiful fire-red shoots.
Came one, awe-inspiring like Muruga Himself,
His head adorned with abundant tresses, black and curled,
From oiling long and combing ; bathed with unguents,
Cool and fragrant, washed and dried, the combing fingers
Unravelling tangles, they glistened sapphire-blue,
With the pleasant incense of hard-core eaglewood,
Whose unction draws the humming beetle,
Melodious as the *yāzh*. He wore a garland fragrant, cool,
Woven of flowers divers in kind and scent and hue,
Gathered with skill from hill and plain and bough and tarn,
And a wreath of the white and scented screw-pine[18] leaf.
He had wound round his tresses a strand of *champak* threaded,
Green-stemmed, fine-petalled, and o'er one ear wore
The comely shoots of the *ashok*, whose flowers bright
Are a fiery red, and they lay trailing
On His stout shoulders. On his broad expansive bosom,
Daubed thick with sandal-paste, own home of prowess, lay
The fragrant garland rightful[19], lovely with the jewels.
His hand with its brawny forearm, whereon were seen
The lines that mark the nobly born, held the bow,

Painted and strongly bound, with arrows chosen well.
His garment, fastened tight, with no loose ends,
Was secured by a belt of fine and curious workmanship.
And as he moved, the hero's anklets, lovely gold,
With rhythmic beauty rose and fell, with each sure step.
His hounds, big-clawed, with fangs that gleamed like bamboo spikes,
Bursting with angry pride that forbade near approach,
Like a host of spear-armed youth none durst press near,
Of valour proved in laying waste the foeman's land
And making him turn tail, surrounded us and closed
On us with unblinking eyes. Trembling with fright
We rose to flee with faltering steps, confused.
Like the bull which, having fought and driven away
Its rivals, proudly strides, and when it sees strange cows
In a strange place, approaches winsomely, so he came.
Fearing to see our fears from minds aflutter,
He spoke soft and sweet, with words attuned to our ears,
Praising the famed beauty of our hair done in five[20] different ways,
And said, ' Young ladies with bangles bright, and swaying,
Slender forms that subtly charm, and navels curved and sweet,
And eyes so gentle, lovely, cool, I've lost my quarry.'
Seeing we did'nt reply, he was nonplussed and sad ;
' Soft, sylph-like maids,' said he, ' would it be wrong for you
To speak to me, even if you show me not
Where my quarry's gone ? ' And he broke off a branch,
That hung, broad and leafy, with pollen-bearing blooms,
Where the male bee waited in dalliance on its loving mate,
Whose hum was like the strumming of the *Pālai yāzh*
When the player ends the Nāttai mode ; with a swish,
Masterful as the elephant's, unmindful of the goad,
He silenced his hounds' harsh bark, and waited for our words.
As the woodman, merrily drunk on the honey-mead brewed
By his good wife with the gazelle eyes, had forgot,

In his small, straw-covered hut, with its short posts,
The watchman's duty, the elephant stripped from its stalk
And swallowed the millet grain ; what was left, so small
That grieving youth, drawing the handsome snake-like bow,
Their wrath betrayed by face and gesture, drove away,
Making the forest echo with the din
Of flying arrows, beaten stalks and whistling lips,
The elephant in rut. Trumpeting like the rain-cloud,
And lashing the earth with lordly blows from its trunk
Uprolled, with its dark crinkly hide, the pride of lust
Showing in its wrath, it came crashing through the trees,
And charged us like the god of death ; we did not know
Where to flee for life. On an impulse we dashed,
Modesty all forgot, with fearful minds and trembling,
And the jingling of our bangles, burnished, strong, well made,
Towards him, where he stood, like peacocks spirit-possessed.
Drawing the bow with all his strength, our lord despatched
The arrow with the long notched shaft so swift
From the bow-string, piercing the elephant's noble front,
That the blood welled up and covered its face and marred
The beauty of its forehead with its spots and lines.
The animal panicked and fled. As in the grounds[21]
Where women possessed sacrifice goats and frenzied dance
To the great God Muruga, stands the *kadamba* tree,
With a garland like a woman's modesty
On its burly trunk, so stood he, with us round him,
Our hands still clasped, and trembling like plantains[22] on a bund
Battered by foaming freshes breaking. Said Great-heart,
' Soft, fair-haired one, there's nought to fear, thou charmest me '.
And he wiped my spotless friend's forehead and thought long,
Then looked at me and smiled. She, shy and alarmed,
Wanted to break away, but he would not let her go.
With both hands he gathered her to his bosom,
He, lord of the country on whose mountain-flanks

Are long tarns in the hard rock, in which falls pepper ripe,
And the sweet fruit of the thick-trunked mango, and honey
Scattered by the bees,[23] and the sweet, dew-dropping kernel
Of the ripe jack that has burst its rind,—
The mead[24] thus brewed, the peacock takes for water,
And drinking, falters in its gait, like the rope-dancer,
Who, as the music keeps up a thin and scraggy note
In the village fair-ground where a festival's on,
Stumbles as the tempo quickens ;—the mountain itself,
Charms with the sweet, cool blossoms that flutter down
From the red *kāndal* on its sky-kissing tops
Shaken by the dancing feet of the mountain-nymphs,
And lie spread on the ground like women's bodices,
A delight to the eye.
He, the conquering hero,
Divining her secret thoughts, said with ardent desire,
' In the house with its doors ever open wide,
Dispensing food without stint to all who come—
As potfuls of food are given away in festivals—
It would be joy indeed to see thee at the door,
To greet and feed the high-born guests unblemished,
Along with their kin, on food that drips with fat and ghee,
And partake, worthy maid, of the remnant at thy hand '.
And that, he assured her, would be salvation sure for both.
He praised the God Who abides on the mountain high,
And raised his hands in prayer, and pledged his troth,
Which joyed her, and of the hill-stream's water drank,
Fine and sweet and clear, and thus he won her trust.
The rest of the day, in a flower-filled forest glade,
Which even the gods in high heaven might covet,
They spent the lovers' tryst to a wild elephant owed.
As the many-rayed sun steered his seven-horse chariot
And set behind the western mountain at close of day,
Under the trees the deer herded and chewed the cud ;
The cows, lowing to their calves, crowded in their byres ;
The bent-billed curlew, with its horn-like note, called to its mate
From the inner fronds of the tall stout palm ;

The serpent voided its jewel, and cowherds everywhere
Played on their reeds the *āmbal*, sweet and clear, o'er and o'er again ;

The lovely petals of the lily unfolded ;
Beautiful women with bracelets on their arms
Lit lamps in their prosperous homes and prayed ;
Brahmanas were at their devotions ; with kindling sticks,
The woodmen in their sky-grazing lofts lit fires.
Round the high mountains gathered the black clouds ;
The beasts of the jungle, with their alternate calls,
Made almighty din ; and to the cry of birds
Came evening, speeding like an angry king
Out to make war on his foes.
Seeing this, he said,
'I shall wed thee later in the sight of all the world,
When thy kin, taking thy fair-lined forearms in their hands,
Put them into mine ; wait awhile for me,
And don't despond, O bright-jewelled one,' said he so sweet,
Dispelling our grief ; and like the bull that has mated,
Followed us till we came to our old City's gate,
Where the drums never cease, and left us at the watering-place.
From that day on he came with unabated love
To their tryst at night ; and if watchmen on their rounds,
Or the barking of angry dogs, or thy wakefulness,
Or the light of the rising moon should deny him
Sweet sleep on her bamboo-slim shoulders, and he must back,
He was not bitter—and he is still in the prime of youth—
Nor does he allow pride of wealth to mar his noble worth.
Deeming such secret meetings wrong and unprofitable,
And dangerous, besides, in this ill-natured place,
Assured that lawful wedded life with him alone was right,
She, with the tears trickling on her breast
From the moist drooping lids of those wide eyes,
So soft and cool, now turbid like the rain-sodden bloom,
Pines in her grief like the peahen netted,
Thinking of the perils of his secret wayfaring
Among his crowded hills at night, with tigers in their lairs,

Lions and bears and wild oxen with hollow horns,
Elephants, and the cruel thunderbolt that strikes and kills
By its overweening strength, and haunting, vengeful spirits,
Serpents that seek their prey, and narrow tarns,
Deep and dark, in whose perilous whirlpools lie
Crocodile with crooked feet and the alligator,
And murderous haunts of footpads, and slimy bogs,
Tracks that suddenly cease, goblins, adders,
And many a villainous spot that takes toll of life.

NOTES

For explanation of the title of the poem, see note No. 16 below.

1. The foster-mother of the heroine, and possibly, the companion's own mother.
2. Divination by looking at paddy in a winnowing fan, and by the Molucca bean. Such men were to be found in large numbers in that City, says the poet.
3. N. interprets this as ' the many gods '.
4. Even to the casual beholder, who may be a stranger.
5. The heroine's words may be taken as implying remorse for wounding the feelings of her parents by her unconventional behaviour.
6. ' anxious love ', which made the parents eager to bestow her on a husband of their choice.
7. ' Praise ', because after all the Gāndharva form of marriage is sanctioned by the Śāstras.
8. The heroine thus indicates her desire that her companion should discreetly reveal the fact to her parents.
9. N. suggests that the companion tries to exculpate herself by indicating that she was only an accessory after the fact !
10. There is a popular fallacy that elephant's tusks contain pearls.
11. The grain that is produced when the bamboo flowers.
12. It might mean also a sling.
13. The God Muruga, the Lord Siva's son, who as a child destroyed the *Asura* Tāraka. He is the deity of the mountains. *Tirumurugārrup-padai* (translated in this volume) dwells on His greatness.
14. It might refer to the small of the back rather than the nape (*śiru-mudhuhu*).
15. The *Gloriosa superba*. For the long list of flowers that follows, see the Glossary.
16. The *Strobilanthus*, which flowers once in twelve years and is the symbolic flower of the mountain region and of ' *kurinchi* ', the emotional state that culminates in the union of lovers. The explanation of the title of the poem is to be found in this last connotation.
17. ' Āyō ' is the repeated, long drawn cry with which the watcher frightens the birds.

18. The wreath of screw-pine, according to the poet, is what signally contributes to the awe-striking appearance of the hero, reminding the onlooker of Muruga.

19. As a hereditary distinction of the chiefs of his line. But N. would apply the attribute to the jewellery ; in which case it would mean ' old family jewels '.

20. Women's *coiffure* took five different forms, such as wearihg the hair in a bun, or knotted on one side, or in a single plait, or in a number of plaits, or in long curls.

21. The drenching of the ground with the blood of the elephant recalls by association the grounds where the *kadamba* tree, sacred to Muruga, stands, and where women possessed by devils sacrifice to the god, who is supposed to be present in the tree.

22. There is a material difference in interpretation here. N. takes the reference to the plantains on a river bank crumbling under the impact of freshes, to justify reading into the passage the meaning that the girls actually jumped into the river *after* the elephant had fled, and the hero jumped in after them and rescued them. This is, to say the least, improbable.

23. ' Scattered by the bees ' : N. interprets differently : ' the bees that come to taste the honey that thus falls into the pool are repulsed by the swiftness of the current.'

24. Tamil poetics valued the poetic beauty of suggestion (*dhvani*) as much as the Sanskrit *ālankārikas* did.

' Ullurai Uvamam ', translated as ' an implied or embedded simile ', is a figure of which the descriptions of mountain-scenery in lines 205-218 are regarded as containing examples. Thus, the peacock getting intoxicated on the sweet fermented juices in the pool, is the heroine who revels in the happiness brought by this clandestine love ; while the stumbling of the peacock is a simile for the girl's unhappiness that her love has not got the seal of lawful marriage in the sight of all the world. The ' kāndal ' flowers fluttering down from the mountain heights are, again, symbolic of the condescension of the great prince in seeking the hand of a commoner and bringing her joy.

NEDU-NAL-VĀDAI

This poem of 188 lines is perhaps the most artistically satisfying of the entire collection included in *Pattu-p-pāttu*. It is attributed to Nakkīrar, a famous poet and critic, a Brahmana by birth, who, according to tradition, dared to contradict God Siva Himself on a question of critical judgment, and had to pay heavily for it. The same tradition attributes to him the authorship of *Tiru-murugāṟṟup-padai*. But quite a number of modern scholars dissent, and maintain that the latter is the work of a comparatively late author, who perhaps lived in the sixth or seventh century A.D. (On this more is said in the Preface to *Tiru-murugāṟṟup-padai*).

The North Wind, which gives its name to the poem, embodies the very spirit of the South Indian winter (which must not be confused with the winter that countries in the temperate zones know). ' Love in separation ' is the favourite theme of much poetry both in Sanskrit and Tamil, and separation is full of anguish when it occurs in the rainy months, or in the cold season that follows, with discontinuous showers and an occasional heavy downpour. A great ruler (who, from a stray indication in the poem, to be referred to presently, appears to be the Pāndyan King, identified as the historical Nedunchezhian) had gone to war with an enemy during summer, the season for campaigns. It was apparently a prolonged affair, for he could not go back home before the rains started in July-August, when hostilities were normally suspended, but remained in camp even after winter had set in. It is, thus, a winter camp that is described in the last part of the poem (ll. 175-194) ; whereas the camp so elaborately described in *Mullai-p-pāttu* was a summer camp.

The poem is a series of brilliant impressionistic sketches. We are shown the cowherds, children of nature who delight in the open air, shivering in the cold enhanced by a sudden squall. The few lines which show the suffering of bird and beast bring before our minds the cruelty of the weather even more vividly than Shakespeare's

> Like a red morn that ever yet betoken'd
> Wreck to the seaman, tempest to the field,

Sorrow to shepherds, woe unto the birds,
Gusts and foul flaws to herdsmen and to herds.
(*Venus and Adonis* ll. 453-6).

But this winter does not blast all life and blot out all cheer. You see the *muśuttai* and the golden gourd flower bloom on their vines ; the storks and cranes, long starved by the incessant showers of the rainy season, fish in the thinning stream during a brief break. The lush paddy stalks delight the eye, and the areca swells with its burden of nuts. The trees in the crowded groves are not denuded and bare, but thick with leaves and with many-coloured blooms which lend their hue to the rain drops as they hang on the bough.

Life in the cities is no less insistent. The common folk enjoy themselves wandering in the street, fortified with drink against the cold. The quality, in their stately homes, delight in the comfort of the fireside and the amenities of civilization. But the cold North Wind is everywhere, and everywhere the patter of rain-drops is heard, keeping up a melancholy refrain :

The season of the cold wind holds high sway,
With ceaseless rain, as parted lovers grieve.

It is in this setting, and against the magnificence of a great King's palace, that the silent suffering of a faithful wife, the spouse of the King who has gone to the wars, is shown in an extraordinarily impressive way. Her austere self-denial—she is clad in rough homespun and has discarded almost every ornament except the auspicious wedding string—adds to her nobility ; no word escapes her lips, though she is the very picture of woe. The words of assurance and encouragement from her plump nurses and the solicitous attentions of her trim maids make no dent on this unspoken grief, as she gazes wistfully on the picture of Rohiṇi and the moon painted on the canvas over her head and grieves that she and her lord could not be as inseparable. Her melancholy seems unrelieved by stray gleams of hope as in the case of her counterpart of the *Mullai-p-pāttu*. The prayer by her attendants to the Dispenser of all blessings, that her husband might be enabled to return early by a victory over the combined strength of the many foes he is facing, voices her own deepest yearning ; but for that quiet reliance on Providence her grief had turned to despair.

The picture of the King's camp is, by comparison with that in the *Mullai-p-pāttu*, brief, but every word tells. The Pāndyan is recognised by the neem chaplet bound on the head of the spear which his captain carries ; and it is this solitary touch, identifying the hero, which is supposed to convert the poem from one of the *akam* class to one of the *puram* class. He utters no words, but his kind looks pour balm on the wounds of his veterans. He is so informal that he does not care even to cover himself with his upper garment but tucks it under his arm. His horses and elephants crowd round him and bespatter him with mud and slush ; only the royal umbrella shields him from the whirling rain drops as they fall. He conveys the impression of patient strength ; though engaged in war and clothed in the habiliments of authority, his humanity is proof against adversity as well as against wind and weather. The omnipresent North Wind in fact serves to emphasise it. And, though not a word is said about his feelings for his loving wife, it is easy to see that he is exercising an iron self-control.

Austere self-control is thus the key-note of the poem. The North Wind braces, even while it inflicts suffering ; it enriches life and quickens men's wits. The rich have their seasonable comforts, and they are described with loving detail. The poor have their splendid health. The birds and the beasts suffer mutely, but the earth burgeons with its fruitfulness. Winter here does not merely precede spring, it holds within itself the riches thereof. The North Wind is the brother of Shelley's West Wind :

> Wild spirit, which art moving everywhere,
> Destroyer and Preserver, hear, O ! hear.

Only lovers—who characteristically live wholly in the present—grieve ; even the domestic dove, though not separated from its mate, is denied the pleasure of pecking for food in the open in its company. But the lovers in this poem are sustained by that constancy against which even the North Wind is powerless ; that is their true patent of nobility. That perhaps was what the poet had in mind when he called the long-lasting North Wind ' good '. It evokes a whole new order of moral as well as natural beauty.

In accordance with the austerity of feeling the poet portrays, he is very sparing in figures of speech. But every detail is a picture in itself, painted with the utmost economy of words. There is an almost pre-Raphaelitic concreteness of imagery. The queen is in the inner chamber, significantly called the *Garbha-gṛha*; and to her and her great loneliness we are led step by step, as one goes from the massive *gōpura* on to the splendid carved colonnades, and through the great hall and the antechamber, to the sanctum sanctorum; from the multitudinous world to the solitary spirit.

THE WINTER OF HER DISCONTENT[1]

[2]As th' unfailing cloud of the rainy season rose,
And wheeling right, and bending, its first showers poured,
Making the world cold, the herdsmen with their crooks,[3]
Who hated the flood, moved to a different pitch
Their many herds with their bulls ; grieved at parting[4]
From the land they had known, with chaplets rain-sodden,
Of the long-petalled *kāndal*, they cowered round the fire,
Sore tried by the cold and shivering, warming their hands
And cheeks, their teeth chattering like castanets.[5]
The beasts forgot their grazing, the monkeys froze,
Birds tumbled from their perch, the cows repulsed
Their calves from drinking. In those bitter wintry nights
The mountain itself seems to feel the cold.
The thick white flowers of the *muśuttai* bloom
On its slender vine, with the golden gourd, o'er every bush,
And flocks of green-legged, light-feathered cranes, with red-lined storks,
Stand on the wet white sand, flecked with dark loam and mud,
Along the rippling stream,[6] 'gainst which the fish shoals rise,
To take them ; and the white clouds, having poured, rise high and swell
In the vast sky, and schooled in restraint,[7] scatter drops.
In their broad, rich acres the ripening paddy ears,
Hang from their lush stalks with ample water nourished ;
And in the gem-blue neck of the thick-stemmed areca,
Where the fat spathes have burst, they show their cluster thick
Of green nuts sweetly ripening, their sides swelling
As the fine, clear juice hardens ; and on the cold tree-boughs
In the broad groves among the crowded hills,
Covered with blooms of every hue, hang the tinted rain-drops.

Then in the long, wide, river-like streets of old cities,[8]
Opulent with lofty mansions, the common folk,[9]
With leafy wreaths on their heads, and shoulders firm and stout,
And beautiful in their strength, with wiry frames
Filled with power, and merry with the drink that lures the bees,
Loaf as they like at close of day, in clothes whose ends
Trail fore and aft, unmindful of the cold drops as they fall.
Then the simple-hearted women with forearms tight
With the white bracelets of conch, and shoulders bamboo-slim,
With their gentle charm, and pearl-like teeth, and eyes so cool
And pleasant, matching the beauty of the ears,
With their burnished ear-pendants, know by the smell
Of th' unfolding petals of the green-stemmed jasmine,
As in their tray they blossom fair, that it is evening,
And light the wicks in ghee-filled iron lamps, and scatter
Paddy grain with flowers, and raise their hands in prayer,
Welcoming sundown, all along the shop-lined streets.
Then the red-legged domestic dove stands idle on its perch,
Shifting its weight from one tired leg to the other ;
Confused, not knowing if it's day or night, it does not go
Out into the open to pick its food with its loved mate.
Domestics at work in the broad, well-guarded mansions,
Grind on the fragrant kitchen-stone, of the colour of black gram,
Musk and other perfumes, while unregarded lie
The round white sandal[10] grindstone from the North
And the sandal of the South, and the women twine
No string of flowers in their plaits, but ignite shredded sandal
And incense raise with the dark-core eaglewood
And coarse white sugar, so in their black, abundant hair
They could lodge a few auspicious blooms. Now the fans,
Dyed red, the lovely work of skilled artificers,
Hang folded in their cases from the curved pegs,
Covered with white cobwebs, while in the lofty upper rooms
The lattice-windows that let in the zephyr of a night

For the summer bed are closed—no one lingers there—
The stout doors bolted fast on their tight-fitting frames.
Everywhere the patter of rain-drops is heard.
None will drink the icy water from the narrow-mouthed jars,
While all seek the red embers in their wide censers.
The dancers, tuning the black-stemmed 'little *yāzh*'
To the mode they sing, find the dulcet strings are lax
And rub them against their high, warm breasts[11] to tune them.

The season of the cold wind holds high sway,
With ceaseless rain, as parted lovers grieve.
On a day towards the end of April[12], when the sun's orb,
Wide-rayed and large, filled the sky, casting no shadow
At the meridian from two poles planted close,
Men versed in the builder's art, holding the plumb-line straight,
Had fixed the cardinals, and in a manner pleasing
To the guardian deities, measured and marked out
The site for a crowned king's palace, with mansions, gates
And halls, enclosed by a high wall. Its *gopura* gates,
So tall, like tunnelled mountains, that elephants enter
With the raised, victorious standards on their backs,
Have massive door-posts daubed with ghee and white mustard,
And held by a stout lintel named after the Uttara star,
Whereon are carved the figures of the Goddess Lakshmi,
With she-elephants[13] holding water-lilies on either side,
And fitted with double doors, iron-clamped, bright-lacquered,
And joined and screwed so firm by expert artisans
That no chink shows. The foreyard, auspicious abode
Of the Goddess of Plenty, shines fair with spread sand
Brought from afar. Before the inner door
Romp the long-haired white yak and the short-legged swan.
Inside, the palace is filled with the clamour
Of thick-maned horses that hate to stand in a row,
And void their grass and neigh with longing for their mates;

And of the glad cries, musical as the horn,
Of the gentle peacocks, echoed by the crowded hills,
As they their long and ample plumage proudly wave,
Hearing the turbid water tumble down the eves
And overflow the ringed troughs, wide-mouthed as a fish,
In the long white inner yard where the King takes the moonlight.
The exquisite bowls of lamps carried in the hands
Of well-made images carved by Ionian[14] craftsmen,
Are filled with the clarified butter of the cow,
And the thick wicks, lighted by the torch, burn bright
With upward-soaring flame ; refed and trimmed from time to time,
They oust the darkness from the strictly guarded women's rooms,
Where no male may enter, not menial even,
But the Great King[15] himself, the Home of all glory.
In the apartment known as the *Garbha-gṛha*[16],
Delightful to the eye, lofty as a mountain,
O'erhung by many-coloured flags, like the rainbow
That lies across the hills, and glistening white with mortar smooth,
With pillars stout and rounded, like black jade,
The long wall, like copper exquisitely wrought,
Limned with a marvellous many-flowered vine,
Was a round divan, wide and spacious, fitted with legs
Fashioned of elephant tusks that the forty-year-old had shed,
Dying from battle wounds—handsome, with legs like drums,
And forehead deeply lined, it was famed in war—
Which skilled workers had smoothed, and with sharp chisel carved
Into the semblance of leaves; the middle shaped like a pot,
Round and firm as a woman's heaving breasts filled with milk
In advanced pregnancy, and the top tapering smooth,

Embellished with garlic shapes. The couch's bottom
Was covered with sheets, burnished, of metal
With tiger-stripes picked out. Slung through fine holes
In the canopy's frame were strands of pearl like lattice bars.
On the divan was spread a mattress soft,
Stuffed with many-coloured wool, and painted
With pictures of a lion hunt and of flowers
Like the jasmine, that grow wild in the woods.
On it lay a quilt of white swan down moulted
By birds in the act of love, with pillows, cushions
And a bed-spread of fine linen, washed and starched
And smelling sweet with the scent of flower petals.
Thereon, with but the auspicious wedding-string that lay
Long on the ample bust that had borne strings of pearl,
Sat one in her loneliness, with the unkempt locks
Of soft, matted hair straggling on the fine forehead ;
The ear-lobes, slight distended, bearing the small clasp's mark
Of fish-shaped ear-rings, big and bright, now discarded.
Wearing only the amulet string and bangles made
Of the right-whorled chank on the forearms that still showed
Where the gold bracelets had pressed and flattened the down ;
With the bent *neḻi* ring wide as the *vālai's* mouth,
Leaving its red mark on the finger where it had pressed,
And the cotton garb, dusty and becoming,
Over the shapely loins that flowered silk had covered,
She looked like a portrait sketch with no tint worked in.
Chafing her feet, lovely but unadorned, to induce sleep,
Stood maids with soft hands, complexioned like the mango shoot,
Wide-freckled, with shoulders slim and rounded like the bamboo,
And breasts tight-laced. like lotus buds, and tiny willow waists.

Seeing her 'suageless grief, her nurses crowd round her,
With their nice, soft, greying hair and ruddy faces,
And seek to distract her with words many and few,
And not all true, but soothing—' He will be here now,
The loved companion,'—but she is unconsoled.
In sore distress, drawing the stout red lacquered stand
Of the canopy close to the bulging legs of the couch,
She sadly gazes on the canvas, new, red-waxed,
Whereon is painted the constellation Rohini[17]
With her inseparable lord, the moon—who moves
So different from the sun, who goes on his long way
Along the heavenly course, starting from the stout-horned ram[18]—
And heaves a deep sigh as she thinks, ' Alas,[19]
That I could not remain unparted ever from my love,
As she from her lord ! ' Alone with her love and grief,
She with her fair finger flicks the tears that stray
From the lovely lids where they have gathered thick,
As someone prays, ' O Mighty Mother,[20]
Send instant victory, so may her travail cease
With the war her lord wages, one against many.'

At dead of night, abjuring sleep the King goes forth
From his camp with a few retainers to see and cheer
The doughty fighters who had slain the enemy's force
Of warring elephants with head-plates burnished bright,
Cutting down their long stout trunks that fell and writhed
On the ground, themselves receiving on face and front
Wounds from the foe's bright swords. As the cold North Wind blows in gusts,
The stout flames waver in the many fine lamp-bowls,
And leaning south rise and bend, as the Captain with the spear,
Stout-staved and decked with the chaplet of neem,
Goes in front, pointing out the wounded in their ranks,
And the big-legged elephants[21] with the bells on their backs,
And the horses with stirrups, swift and proud, bespatter
Him with the black slush of the street. Tucking under his arm

The fine upper garment that has slipped down
From his left shoulder, he rests his right hand lightly
On the stalwart shoulder, wherefrom hangs the sword,
Of the proud sword-bearer, and cheers his men with kind looks,
As th' umbrella of victory, festooned with strings of pearl,
Flaps in the wind and stays the whirling rain-drops as they fall.

NOTES

1. The title of the poem means, literally, 'The good long North Wind.' Some modern scholars regard this as a euphemism, even if they do not see a positively satirical intent in it. Others consider that it signifies that the Wind is 'good' for the King, since it steeled his resolution to win the war and brought out his human qualities; while yet others regard the poem as a hymn of praise to all-conquering love.

2. Note the similarity to the opening of *Mullai-p-pāttu*. But, while that song dealt with the beginning of the rains, this deals with the onset of 'winter'—which is more accurately described in the poem as 'the season of the cold North wind'. Therefore one modern commentator, who explains that even in 'winter' you can have continuous drizzling as well as an occasional heavy shower, prefers to treat this as an instance of such a sudden and heavy downpour at the beginning of winter. But this does not wholly solve the difficulty; for it does not explain why the cowherds had not shifted their pitch at the very beginning of the rainy season proper.

3. It might also mean the stick with which they keep the cows in order.

4. Hitherto they had grazed their cattle near their own villages, themselves living there, but now they have to move with them to higher ground in the hilly jungle.

5. 'War-drum' is the literal meaning of the text; but 'castanets' is more expressive.

6. Not the swollen river, but a thin stream taking off from it, where the carp rise.

7. A pretty conceit. Like the spendthrift who begins to learn thrift when he has wasted his substance, the now empty clouds are learning economy.

8. Identified by the commentators with Madurai, the capital of the Pandyan Kings, and its suburbs.

9. N. thinks it refers to 'mlecchas'; but there is no obvious justification for this. The words describing the physique of these people, who were apparently the urban working class, are strikingly reminiscent of the salt-sellers in *Perumbāṇāṟṟup-padai*. At the end of the day's work they seem to be happily drunk. In this poem as in the others, both the classes and the masses are generally described, though the distinction is not always explicitly stated.

10. The ' Malaya mountain ' (among the Western Ghats) has always been famous for its sandal trees. The sandal grindstone is quarried from the Tirupati Hills, which may be implied by the reference to its Northern origin.

11. The dancers are also proficient singers ; in the cold season, they do not dance, but sing, accompanying themselves on the ' little yāzh ', which is elaborately described in one of the ten poems of the *Pattu-p-pāttu*.

12. The auspicious time for starting work on any building is determined by astrologers, and much importance is attached to proper orientation. The exact time of day was also determined by the measurement of the shadow cast by a straight rod held up perpendicularly. The deities presiding over the quarters are propitiated by appropriate spells and offerings.

13. Because the iconographic representation of the Goddess Lakshmi with elephants on either side usually shows them as presenting a lotus to her, some commentators differ from N. and suggest that the word ' pidi ' here means not elephants at all but handles fitted to the doors. The cross-beam or lintel on top of the door posts is called ' Uttara-p-palakai ', the first part of the name being also that of a constellation.

14. There is a reference in *Mullai-p-pāttu* also to Ionian craftsmen's metal-work.

15. This is regarded as a reference to Nedun-chezhian, the Pandyan King who won a great victory at Talayālaṅkānam. Poetic convention requires that poems dealing with love (' akam ') should make no reference to a particular or identifiable hero or heroine. This poem violates the rule by indirectly indicating that it was a Pandyan King, by referring to the wreath of neem leaves carried by his Captain's spear, which was the symbol of the Pandyan rulers.

16. The sanctum sanctorum in a temple, compared to the womb, wherein the foetus is held. By analogy it is applied here to the queen's private apartment.

17. Hindu mythology represents the twenty-seven constellations as the spouses of the moon, who is always a male ; his favourite wife is Rohini (Aldebran). Because the moon traverses the zodiac in a month, he comes back much quicker and more frequently to every constellation, unlike the sun who takes a year to cover the orbit. The canopy over the bed evidently contained a picture of the moon and Rohini alone.

18. The first sign of the Zodiac.

19. ' Alas ! . . . lord '. The poem has no words corresponding to this ; it merely says that she looked at the picture thinking of Rohini and (by implication) of her lord the moon, in the context of her own separation from her spouse.

20. This prayer by the attendants, addressed to Koṟṟavai, the Goddess of war, is to be regarded as the ' seed ' or inspiring purpose of the poem, since only the fulfilment of the prayer can end the separation of the lovers.

21. The commentators suggest that the horses and elephants are out in the drizzle at dead of night because they have in their attachment to the King followed him, and they unwittingly bespatter him with mud, by splashing in the slush.

PATTINA-P-PALAI

This poem has 301 lines, of which 138 are in the metre called *āśiriyappā*, which is the metre of all the other poems in *Pattu-p-pāttu* ; while 163 lines are in *vanji-p-pā*, a shorter line. This enables the author to vary the tempo with the mood. Aided by the swiftness of narrative and an almost ballad-like simplicity of diction, the whole thing is light and airy, and it goes with a swing, like a truly pastoral ditty, though its theme is war and destruction, and high affairs of state, and the glory of a great city in its halcyon days, a city known as a famous entrepot to the Greeks and the Romans, which was later submerged by the sea, leaving only a small fishing village in its site. The port was at the confluence of the Kāveri and the sea, and the poem is as much a hymn of praise to the bountiful river, the foster-mother of the Chola country, as a tribute to the martial prowess and statesmanship of Tirumāvalavan, one of the early Cholas and the greatest of them, who tamed the Kāveri in the service of man.

The author, Rudran-Kannanār of Kadiyalur, a Brahmana, was honoured by the King with a gift of 1,60,000,0 ' ponns ' for composing this poem. He apparently pre-deceased his patron. For it is Karunguzhal Ādanār who sings the great King's epitaph (*See Puranānooru* 224, cited by Dr. R. Nagaswamy in his paper on ' Vedic Scholars in the Ancient Tamil country ') and praises his liberality and devotion to Dharma and Vedic religion. Rudran-Kannanār was also the author of *Perumpāṇ-āṟṟuppadai* (which follows.). Unlike the poets of the '*akam*' poems, with which we have been so far concerned, who merge themselves wholly in their creations, he stands out as a man of colourful personality with an extraordinary zest for life, like the people of Kaveri-p-pattinam, whom he lovingly describes as savouring ' life through all the senses ' (1. 105). And he brings to his work an objectivity as well as a professional touch which is comparatively rare in this early poetry. (More on his personality and art will be said in the Preface to the next poem).

While the poem celebrates the great City on the Kaveri

and deals with matters which fall within the realm of ' puram ', the poet converts it by a neat sleight of hand into an ' akam ' poem through two very brief parentheses, in which he makes the narrator address his heart, saying that though he had planned to go abroad to make his fortune, leaving his faithful wife at home, he could not at the last moment bring himself to do it ; he simply could not tear himself away from her company.

The modern reader, who is not likely to be inhibited by the strait-laced convention of *akam* and *puram*, will enjoy the poem as unfolding a great pageant of a City becalmed, not in the morning stillness, as Wordsworth saw London from Westminster Bridge, but under the pall of antiquity. He can also see it in imagination lying, like De Quincey's Savannah-la-Mar, under thirty feet of water, with temples and spires, and banners flying, where there had been teeming marts and a pullulating population with pomp of riches and civilized pleasures. The bucolic pastimes and mimic fights of the well-fed working class, the never-ending festivals pertaining to all creeds and faiths, the prosperity brought by foreign trade, the liberality of the prince and zeal for the welfare of man and beast, the freedom from parochialism and prejudice, which enabled merchants from the remote corners of the land to dwell there in friendly amity with the local population—a characteristic of all old civilizations, as the reader acquainted with Vālmiki's description of Ayodhyā (R. I. v.) will recognize—the vigorous intellectual life issuing in friendly but rigorous debate on religion and philosophy, as well as in the pursuit of the arts like music and poetry and their employment in the service of religion—these features of the old city life are presented with a compact but vivid realism that make them seem almost contemporary. The poet, without any intention to preach, points out that such a city must draw its strength not only from the prosperity of the rural hinterland but also from the bed-rock of Dharma to which the people are faithful, especially the peasantry in a great agricultural country, the linch-pin of the old organic society.

The poet's presentation of Tirumāvalavan's heroic fight against his captors, his later successful crusades against his enemies, and his constructive statemanship, is as vivid in the

second and smaller part of the poem. The same eye for significant detail lights up the contrast between the magnificence that had been and the devastation that was there after the avenging angel had passed over the enemy land with fire and sword—waterless ponds ; once smiling fields now a tangle of rank grass and weeds ; wild elephants sporting in the ruined hospices for strangers at watering fords; owls hooting from empty grain-bins after bandits had done their work of plundering and devastation. The mind dwells longer perhaps on that picture of dreary desolation than on the brief outline of the opulence of the Chola's new capital at Urayūr given in the last few lines. But Karikāla was no Attila. And the poet, by that calculatedly casual reference to the sandal paste on his breast being rubbed off by the embraces of his children and of his loving spouses, brings out the humanity that was behind the iron mask.

As I have had occasion to remark more than once, it is a civilization very much conscious of class that is depicted in all these long poems ; but that consciousness bred neither strife nor envy. See how easy is the transition from the friendly picture of the prosperous urban classes to the no less sympathetic description of the poor in the semi-rural suburbs ; how the bath in the Kāveri, equally a pleasure and a pious duty, is enjoyed by rich and poor alike ; how the scholars carry on their debates unconcernedly among the throng of the market-place ; how the Buddhist and Jain ascetics live side by side with hermits devoted to the fire-rites. One thinks of the Kaveri-p-pattinam here described as one thinks of the Italian Renaissance and the reign of Lorenzo the Magnificent. With a truly catholic outlook our poet, whose birth and breeding as well as his ardent faith in Dharma and non-violence (see lines 197-207) might be supposed to prejudice him against killing for food, drinking liquor, and the frank enjoyment of sex, describes butchers' and toddy shops and the sweet disorder of married love with as much gusto as he does the free food centres and stalls for cattle and the modesty and refinement of high-class women. Liberty and tolerance were not empty words to the Tamil of one thousand eight hundred years ago.

THE CITY BY THE SEA[1].

Sparkling Venus[2] of spotless fame
May shift its course and wander south ;
The cloud, much to the lark's[3] dismay,
That sings and drinks its drop, may fail
And prove false ; but never plays false
The Kāveri[4] from hill to sea.
Her spreading waters pile up gold
Along her banks in Chola-land,
Dense packed with hamlets lying close,
Where in the wide water-filled fields
That know no rest from tilth, there wilts
The long-bloomed *neidal*[5] in the heat
Of the smoke from the barn where simmers
The fragnant juice of the green cane ;
Where the full-grown buffalo calves
That have gorged on the red rice ears
Doze in the shade of paddy stacks,
And big-bunched coconuts, plantains, palm-fruit,
Clustered areca, fragrant turmeric,
Sweet mango[6] and *śēmbu* tubers
And sprouted ginger plenteous grow ;
Where in the wide courtyards of prosperous homes
Bejewelled women with bright foreheads, innocent eyes
Throw at the fowl that eat grain drying in the sun,
Their spiralled, fish-shaped ear-pendants of gold,
And children with gold anklets cry out against them,
As they come in the way of their three-wheeled toy-carts.
Nought else of dissension do the flourishing folk
Of their rich hamlets and thick-sown townships know.
Broad-bottomed craft with paddy got
For white salt sold, are moored in rows,
Like stabled horses, in lagoons
Skirting gardens in the city by the sea.
Beyond the copses proud, like parvenus,
Of their new-found wealth, lie the flowering groves.

Within its high banks, sturdy, shaped
Like the white Makha[7] star that holds
The full moon in a cloudless sky,
Lies the pool, like a painting fair,
With fragrant flowers of divers hues ;
And there are the twin lakes[8] that bring all joys
That are in heaven and here on earth.
From spacious kitchens that promote
Fame here and merit hereafter,
With doors of planks close-joined, 'graved
With tiger effigy, and enclosed
By solid prosperous walls, runs gruel thick,
Drained from cooked rice, like a river,
Into the streets which turn miry
By bulls' wallowing, and the caked mire,
Powdered by many a chariot passing,
Smudges the white walls, which look like elephants bathed in dust,
Of mansions limned with fine designs and lovely pictures.
In the yards of mangers, where big bulls may feed,
Are cool little pools. From the dense-leaved, low-branched groves
Where the monks[9] have their cells, the koel with its big black hens
Retreats, sick from the fragrant smoke of oblations
Made by hermits with matted hair, to live alone
With the pebble-eating doves[10] in the city, guarded[11]
By goblins, and a watch so strict that none durst trespass.
On the broad mounds of ridgéd sand
With old trees on them, mimic fights
Are fought by stout warriors[12] proud,
Of many clans close-connected ;
One side fed on roasted shrimp,
The other on boiled turtle,
One decked with sand-grown *adambu*,
The other with water-lily.
Like stars and planets that wheel right and rise
And wander among each other in the blue sky,

They stream in and out of the crowded ring,[13]
And hit each other with arms and naked fists, resolved
In their mounting anger, never to give ground ;
Then, seeing the issue still undecided,
The rivals make trial of strength with slings,
Frighting the birds off the pitted palms.
In ' Cheri ' suburbs with their ring-walled springs
Pigs with their litter, cocks of many breeds,
Fighting rams and partridges play.
On the sandy floor of courtyards,
Like shadows in the moon-light, dry
The fishing nets in the low-thatched huts
'Gainst which the long fishing rods lean
Like the upright spears with leather shields
Round the warrior's memorial stone.
Shock-headed fisherfolk on full-moon day
Go not fishing out in the wide sea, cold and dark,
But, decked with wreaths of the cool *veṇ-thāli* bloom
That grows beneath the screw-pine bush,
Invoke their powerful tutelar god[14]
In the horn of the pregnant shark
That they have planted ; offering worship
With screw-pine leaves and the toddy
Of the rugged date-palm, they quaff the drink
And deck themselves with the leaves, and eat and play
With their leaf-clad, kohl-dark women the livelong day.
On the sea-shore with its smell of flesh and flower,
Where, like the cloud hugging a mountain dark,
Or the babe nestling in the mother's breast,
The river mingles with the clear tides of the sea
With the thunder of great waters, lies the port.
They bathe in the sea to be cleansed of their sins,
Then wash the brine off in the river ;
They catch and dangle crabs and sport in the flying spray,
Make dolls, and savour life through all the senses,
And play daylong and yet can never tire
Of the unfailing delights of the flower-filled ford,
So like the bliss of paradise eternal[15].

Modest women after the act of love
Discard their silks for their spouses' raiment,
Their toddy for men's strong drinks;
Men's chaplets then are worn by women,
While men wear women's garlands. The lamps
That still keep burning in the lofty mansions
With their tall colonnades, the fishers from their curved boats count.
Some hear music, others see plays,
While yet others revel in the moonlight's sweetness,
Till sleep comes to all in the last watch of the night.
Then only sleep on the pure sand-drifts,
Fragrant with flower-scents the Kāveri brings,
The simple men who the day long
Work without rest, like the horses
Of the sun whose rays fiercely burn,
Collecting toll in the wide street by the sea,
Where the white-petalled, scented screw-pine blooms;
Famed, like their fathers before them,
For letting none cheat the good King of his dues.
Scarce diminished by this levy
Here goods of every kind pile up,
Coming ceaselessly past reckoning
From sea to land, from land to sea,
As in the season of the rains
The clouds pour water on the hills
From the sea, and the water flows
Back from the hills into the sea.
In the toll-house, so well guarded
None durst approach, the appraiser armed
With power to punish thieves, affixes
The tiger mark and values goods
Of every kind, which then pass out;
The bags in the courtyard a mountainous heap,
From which the sharp-toothed, bow-legged dog and the ram
Jump like the mountain sheep[16] on the cloud-clad hills
Of mountains with foot-hills where the big bamboo grows.

On lofty, cloud-kissed upper floors
Ringed in with verandahs gained by ladders,
Long and close-runged, with many compartments,
Doorways big and small, and vestibules long,
Women with fair feet and close-set thighs,
Wearing lovely jewels, their ample loins
Sumptuously clad, their complexion like coral,
Charming the beholder with the peacock's grace
And the fawn-eyes, and the parrot's gentle prattle,
Stand at the windows where the zephyr enters
And fold their bracelet-crowded hands,
Like twin blossoms depending from the nodes
Of pollen-dropping red *kāndal* on the high hills,
As the song of the virgins' frenzied dance for Muruga
Ascends with the jubilant flute[17] and the *yāzh* complaining,
The tabor vibrant and the thundering drum,
From the wide market streets where festivals never cease.
The flags[18] to the One true God worshipped by all,
Raised aloft o'er the flower-strewn temple gate ;
The hero's cloth flag—white as the flower
Of sugarcane fair that grows on the banks
Of the wild river that brings the white sands—
Raised on the shield that tops the spears,
Planted on ground waxed[19] and smeared
With sandal paste, and strewn with rice,
Whereon are placed in bulky baskets
Offerings of cooked rice and of sweets
Spread cool and low on a white cloth ;
The intimidating flag of challenge raised
By scholars loyal to their ancient creed,
Who have conned their books and heard the wise discourse ;
The traders' much-prized flag on the masts
Of the gently heaving ships in harbour,
Like *masth* elephants tugging at their stakes,
In goodly Puhār's[20] wave-tossed port ;
The flags of toddy shops where all may come,
With courtyards clamorous with the noise
Of gutting fish and frying flesh,

Raised o'er the door, where, on heaped sand,
Flower-scattered, offerings to the gods are made ;
And many an other flag o'er other marts,
Of divers shapes and colours cast their shadows
That bar the moving sun's rays from the opulent City,
Within whose borders, thanks to the fostering care
Of the gods of undying fame, lie the broad streets
Where wealth is dizzy with pride, crowded with things rich and rare,
Under whose weight the earth sags—horses proudly erect,
That came o'er the waters, bags of black pepper
Brought by cart, gems and gold from the Northern mountain,[21]
Sandal and eaglewood from the hills of Coorg,
Pearls from the Southern Sea, coral from the East,
Gangā's wealth and Kāveri's produce,
Eezha's provisions and Kāzhaga's plenty.
On land and water sleep in bliss
And multiply and play and crowd
Fish in the courtyards of fishers
And beasts about the butchers' homes ;
For they look not upon them as foes.
Weaning[22] men from the lust to rob and kill,
Honouring the gods and helping men savour the smell
Of oblations in the fire ; rearing milch cows and plough-bullocks ;
Bruiting abroad the fame of Vedic scholars ;
Making gifts of cake and raw rice,
Live lives meritorious like a cool shade
The husbandmen who love the crooked plough.
The traders, men of goodwill who observe
The golden rule and behave like the yoke's central pin ;
Truthful for the good name of their class ;
Dealing justly with what is theirs and what is others ' ;
Not buying unfairly, nor giving short measure,
Declaring their modest profits openly,
Live here in numbers large, with wealth long earned.
Merchants from other lands, well versed in tongues
Other than their own, having sojourned in other climes,

Live in this city of ceaseless splendours manifold
In loving amity with the townsfolk, like the elders
Of large clans, wise from much discourse with divers folks
In other lands, meeting at an old pilgrims' tryst.
[23]Even to gain that city, I would not—
Bless thee, my heart !—follow thee, forsaking her
Of the long black locks and shining jewels.
Like the tiger-cub, sharp-clawed, with zig-zag stripes,
He, Tirumāvalavan,[24] had in bondage grown tough,
From innate greatness. Having matured his plan,
As the elephant pulls down with his tusk the high walls
Of his pit, filling it, and climbs out with his thick trunk
To join his mate—so he climbed the thick walls
Of his foes' closely guarded prison-house,
Unsheathed his sword and his birth-right duly won.
But not content with getting back his own,
He took with him the noble elephants that brought down
The guarded ramparts of the foe, and with their tusks
Splintered their *gopura* doors, kicked down and tossed on the ground
Their crowned black heads with their sharp-nailed front legs' pads,
And horses that wore cast bells, and men that sported
The *poolai*,[25] big and small, like close hills covered with brush,
Which spoke their war-like intent, and routed the foe
In that his first campaign, and the wide camp resounded
With the thunder of the ghoul-eyed guardsmen's drum[26]
As fighters fell and the spacious sky was filled with circling kites.
Nor stopping there, he pushes on into enemy land
Making their peasantry flee.
Where the red rice had flourished with the white-tufted cane,
Where the *neidal* had grown with the large-petalled lily,
In the wide ponds where the alligator had lorded it,
Is a tangle of reeds and thick-stemmed coarse grass,

Waterless ; there you will not know field from pond,
And the rough-horned stag[27] romps with the hind.
In the halls with *Siva-lingas* at the watering ford,
Washed with cowdung and strewn with flowers, where strangers stayed,
And captive enemy women, having bathed, would light
The night-long lamp at dusk, and the townsfolk prayed,
The tall thick columns lean awry from the constant rubbing
Of the bluff bull elephants as they play with their cows.
The eerie halls where festivals have long ceased—
Opening on streets strewn with costly, fragrant flowers,
Where to the tabor's sound skilled actors played
Soft music on the *yāzh* with well-strung, twisted guts—
Are overgrown with coarse grass and the small caltrop
And the fiery-mouthed jackal howls, terrifying folk,
And the dolorous farm-owl hoots with the screeching owl,
And she-ghouls with streaming hair, that feed on cadavers,
Gather in large numbers and dance with their burly mates.
In the round-pillared mansions of prosperous towns
Where in the front hall always fed a throng of guests
Without the food in the kitchen growing any less,
And there was milk enough to feed the parrots
That prattled from the high piazzas stuccoed bright,
The doleful owl in daylight shrieks from grain bins emptied
By bands of sandalled robbers with cruel bows, playing their drums.
Though he had thus ravaged the fair face of the towns,
High-walled and well-guarded, his wrath was unabated
Till he had destroyed the foe, fulfilling his first intent—
So people said, ' He can pull down the mountains,
Fill up the seas, bring down the skies, abate the winds '.
The hordes of Oli-Nādu[28] were sunk in submission ;
The kings of old Aruvā-land came asking for orders ;
Northerners wilted, Coorgis lost heart,
The Southerner's strength was sapped by his furious onslaught,
And as his eye reddened in a frown,
The weak shepherd chiefs were wiped out quite,

And Irungo-vēl's clansmen humbled in the dust,
Thanks to his fighters and the stout-legged elephant-force
That had the enemy's solid ramparts proudly taken.
He routed the wilderness and planted towns ;
He deepened tanks and brought abundance,
Enlarged Uraiyūr[29] with its big-doored mansions,
Gave it fanes and a large populace.
Its ramparts, with great gates and posterns,
And bundled arrows behind the fosses,
Flashed as afore with the warlike glow
Of victorious fighters who proclaimed
They would take on whatever foes might come.
Nor turned tail, but backed their vaunt with their lives,
Dimming the lustre of kings whom tight-strapped tabors had boomed,
Their emerald crowns now laid on his hero's anklets ;
The red sandal on his breast rubbed off by his children,
Gold-jewelled, flinging themselves on it, and by the breasts,
Like lotus buds, of women decked from head to foot—such is the King
Tirumā-valavan, with the lion's strength that dismays the foe.
—But harder far than the lance that he lets fly
Was the forest that I should have had to cross,
And, ah ! her shoulders, big and soft, are cooler than his rule !

NOTES

1. 'Pattinam' in the title refers to Kaveri-p-poom-Pattinam (the City full of flowers on the Kāveri) which was a flourishing sea-port under Kārikāl Chola of the 2nd Century A.D. 'Pālai' (in the title) signifies that division of 'akam' poems which describes lovers in separation and their feelings. While this poem, dealing mainly with war and other external preoccupations, is predominantly of the 'puram' type, the author has in lines 218 to 220 and 299 to 301 of the poem (corresponding to ll. 223-5, and 305-7 of the translation) provided a tenuous link with *akam* by making the narrator (be it the poet or some other unnamed person) say that, though he had thought of going abroad to make his fortune he could not bear the idea of separation from his beautiful wife even if he stood to gain Kaveri-p-pattinam itself by thus adventuring.

2. Venus is supposed to be a planet whose movements are particularly favourable to rain.

3. Commentators interpret the ' bird ' of the original as referring to the lark, though according to Sanskrit poets it is the *chātaka* that lives solely on rain drops.

4. The magnificent tribute to the Kāveri is indirectly a tribute to Karikāla himself, who raised the bunds of the river, built the great stone dam diverting flood waters into the Coleroon, and tamed the river in the service of agriculture.

5. ' Neidal ' : This is a water-flower, which grows in the fields as a weed in the fallow season when they are filled with water. Sugarcane was apparently crushed and boiled on the spot.

6. ' Sweet mango ' : N. interprets the word ' ina ' to mean ' different varieties ' of mango.

7. ' Makha ' : The tenth lunar asterism. Recent archaeological excavations have revealed some of the sites here described.

8. The two sacred tanks were known as ' The lake of the sun ' and ' The lake of the moon '.

9. These ' monks ' might be ascetic Jains and Buddhists. The hermits were Hindus.

10. Quite a number of similar references in Sangam poetry to this pretty popular belief that doves eat pebbles are cited by Dr. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer in his edition of the poem.

11. ' the City guarded by goblins : ' N. thinks this refers to a temple dedicated to the dread goddess Kāli outside of (possibly at the entrance to) the City. The interpretation adopted in the translation assumes that the koel, mistaking the smoke of oblations for clouds, retreats from the hermits' groves (which are usually situated outside the City) and takes shelter in the eves of tall mansions inside, as doves usually do. (See the Tirunelveli Saiva Siddanta Samājam edition of the poem, for a detailed discussion).

12. N. takes the whole passage to refer to the pastimes of young boys of the Bharata community.

13. ' Crowded ring ' : It might also mean something like a gymkhana building.

14. Varuna, the Guardian of the West and the Lord of Ocean.

N. takes the colour of sea-water to be black and of the river-water to be red and renders the simile as ' a russet cloud resting on a black mountain '.

15. N. takes the reference to ' paradise eternal ' as a tribute to the opulence of the lofty mansions mentioned in l. 113.

16. ' Mountain sheep ' : The commentators say that it is a kind of deer called ' varudai '. But the lexica render it as ' fleecy sheep ' or ' mountain sheep '.

17. The lines in the original, describing the impact of the musical instruments, are singularly beautiful as an example of sound echoing sense.

18. The flags are raised in honour of the One God without limitations or attributes, Whom men conceive of in different ways and worship according to their notions ; the flags they raise reflect their predilections.

19. ' waxed ', or washed with liquid cowdung.

20. ' Puhār ' is the other name of Kaveri-p-pattinam, signifying the confluence of the river and the sea.

21. The ' northern mountain ' is Meru. Eezha is modern Ceylon, and Kāzhaga, modern Burma.

22. N. treats the lines 194-218 (of the original) as describing the fine qualities of the Vaisyas, who were agriculturists as well as traders, and who fulfilled their function in the hierarchy of *varnāśrama* as model householders to whom all the other orders were beholden for their upkeep, and who by their example influenced the conduct of others, as is suggested by the picturesque description of fish putting faith in fishermen and sheep in the butcher! (This must not be taken literally, as both butchers and fishers flourished in the country the poet describes.) But the translation, following other commentators, takes different portions of this passage to apply to (1) the peasant, (2) the native merchant community and (3) traders from other lands who have lived long in the City.

23. Here is the first part of the dramatically effective interjection by the poet ; who, in thus investing a ' puram ' poem with ' akam ' overtones, manages to make the transition from the long description of the City to the history and character of the ruler seem easy and natural.

24. ' Tirumāvalavan ' seems to have been his original name. The soubriquet ' Karikāl Chola ' is explained in different ways by different writers.

25. N. suggests that the ' poolai ' flower was worn by the elephants. The context suggests it might mean the King himself. But as such symbolic flowers were sported by all the human participants in a battle, the translation takes it in that sense. ' Poolai ' means, among other things, the red silk-cotton. ' Uliñai ' is described as the small ' poolai ', ' a garland of which was worn by soldiers storming a fort.'

26. ' ghoul-eyed ' : Apparently referring to the big circular portion at the centre of the drum-hide which is blacker in colour than the rest of it.

27. Compare with 1. 105 of *Mullai-p-pāttu*.

28. ' Oli-nadu ' was one of the twelve divisions of the old Tamil-speaking country. ' Aruvā-land ', also known as Aruvāla-Nadu ', was another of those twelve divisions. The ' Southerner ' was the Pandyan King, the principal foe of the Chola. ' Irungo-vel ' was one of the five ' big Velirs ', petty chieftains mentioned in *Madurai-k-Kānji* (included in the *Pattu-p-pāttu* collection).

29. Urayūr (spoken of as Urandai in the poem) is now a small village suburb of Tiruchi town. It was the capital of Karikāl Chola ; it was also known as ' Kozhi-nagar ' (' the City of the Cock ').

PERUM-PĀṆ-ĀṚṚUP-PADAI

This long poem, 500 lines in the original, is the third longest in the *Pattu-p-pāttu* collection. Cast in the form of a travelogue, it is rather loosely knit. A minstrel, who has been richly rewarded by the King of Kāṇchi, advises another with a large and famished following, whom he meets on the way, to go to the same patron. The geography is not clear ; one cannot say where exactly the singers met. But it was evidently at some considerable distance from Kāṇchi ; and the route described contains many different kinds of terrain. Like Chaucer's pilgrims starting from the Tabard Inn, many different kinds of travellers converge at a forest-crossing just within the bounds of King Iḷan-Tirayan's dominions and go their several ways. The salt-sellers, and the itinerant traders from distant parts who go with them for company and safety, are first described ; and our minstrel apparently goes with them. The dry scrub-jungle and the scattered huts of the hardy and primitive folk who live by hunting and trapping animals, their way of life and their homely hospitality, as well as the fortified settlements where their chiefs live, come before us first. This is the *pālai* region. Then we have a brief but vivid glimpse of the professional fighters, the Maravas, who are more or less a law unto themselves, and live a happy-go-lucky life. It is hilly country (*Kurinchi*) that they occupy, and from that they make their periodical cattle-lifting raids. Then we are shown the pasturable land at the foot of the hills (*mullai*), the homes of the shepherds and the cowherds, and as an effective contrast to the idle life of the Maravas, the frugal industry of the cowherd's wife, and the unsentimental Arcadian simplicity of the cowherd living in the grazing grounds with his cattle, working hard and playing on his homely pipe and improvised lute.

After *pālai*, *kurinchi*, and *mullai*, we pass on to the region that partakes of the character of both *mullai* and *marutham*. It is garden land where, for lack of water, mostly dry crops are grown, but it maintains a thrifty and hardy peasantry. Then we are taken to the *marutham* region proper, the rich arable land where the main crop is paddy. We are given

brief but vivid pictures of ploughing and sowing, reaping and threshing, not less absorbing than the First *Georgics* of Virgil, though less methodical and exhaustive. With consummate art, the poet, a great humourist as well as a lover of children and animals, makes the whole scene come alive with such amusing incidents as the buffaloes fighting in the ploughed field, and the farmer's little boys decorating their lousy heads with improvised wreaths and husking parched grain for breakfast when they are tired of 'cold rice with lumps in it'. The tall and rotund bins in which food-grains are stored in these prosperous villages suggest to the poet the appearance of confirmed spinsters—(I follow Tiru Somasundaranar here)—a startlingly modern image !—because they know no change and are tall and bulky in proportion, with ample busts ! With no less zest is the life of the men who fish with nets described.

After a pleasing glimpse of the Brahmana settlement, where even the parrots mouth the Vedic chant by constant hearing, we come to the *neidal* region proper, the sea-coast with its port at the place which is now known as Mahābalipuram, and its prosperous trading community. Then follows a description—not so particularized—of the green and luscious rural interior, with important towns on the way, passing which we come to Kānchi. Here again the poet relies upon his impressionistic method to bring out the historic and religious importance of the Tondaimān's capital as well as its opulence. The valour of the King is compared to that of the heroes of the Mahābhārata war ; while the extraordinarily vivid simile of the horned moon in the scarlet evening sky against the background of a moving cloud, to portray elephant carcases floating in a river of blood, recalls Valmiki's Homeric similes. With the loving reception of the starving minstrel and his kin at the hands of the King, and the account of the benefits he loads them with, we come to the end, the last few lines giving a vivid picture of the holy Vengada hills (the modern Tirumala Hills) over which Iḷan-Tirayan ruled. While the brook that tumbles down from them reminds us of Kapilar's description of the mountain stream in *Kurinchi-p-pāttu*, the picture of peace and amity that was the hermit's abode reinforces the note of *ahimsā* and universal benevolence which, as we noticed, is

explicit in *Pattina-p-pālai* also. The poet had evidently a philosophy of his own, which made life, with all its diversity, which he describes with such zest, meaningful to him.

While Kapilar and Nakkīrar are undoubtedly the greater artists, and perhaps their vision of the world they describe is more deeply coloured by their idealism, Rudran-Kannanār impresses us as the more colourful personality. This is because he stands outside his work, looking at the world which he describes with detachment as well as with humour and sympathy. His pictures are true to life ; he describes ways and manners, even those that might be regarded as alien to him, without prejudice ; but his sympathy does not cloud his judgment. You can see the savagery with which the hunting tribals fall upon the hares they catch and devour on the spot, even as you see their simple women's joy in feeding the chance guest on the grass-rice boiled over the hobless oven. His admiration for the courage and valour of the Maravas does not blind him to their fecklessness. The rich and the poor, the barbarian and the civilized citizen, the sellers of meat and drink as well as the patient and fruitful toil of the tiller who teaches humanity by example, are all represented without distortion, warts and all, and without passion or prejudice. Thus, immediately after describing with avidity the ' resorts of daylong delight ' in the river-gardens, the minstrel asks his pilgrim to go and savour ' the beauty of spring at the ford ' and ' raise his voice in praise of the Lord That sleeps on His serpent couch,' sing to Him with his *yāzh*, and go his ways. The poet was as convinced a believer in the *purushārthas* as he was devout in his allegiance to his chosen deity ; and that, he would apparently like all men to be.

Rudran-Kannanār's art is as accomplished and varied as his tastes and his knowledge of the world. His two poems, translated here, are complementary in bringing out these aspects of his genius. In the first and shorter poem the accent is on swiftness of narration and simplicity of diction. He is not afraid of repeating some of his picturesque fancies either here or in the longer poem. Thus women shying their gold earjewels at the fowl raiding the drying grain, or playing with golden ' kazhal ' nuts, children trundling round toy-carts, the quail and the parrot flying away from men's haunts affrighted

by unaccustomed noise and smells, however pleasant these are to humans, all these serve to enhance the interest of the scene and enrich the awareness of the reader.

This poet is the master of the phrase that lingers in the memory. In the first poem we hear of the copses, ' proud like parvenus of their new-found wealth ; ' of the ' pebble-eating ' doves ; of the scholars' ' intimidating flag of challenge ' ; of the broad streets ' where wealth is dizzy with pride ' ; of the ' lives meritorious like a cool shade ' of the ' husbandmen who follow the crooked plough ' ; of ' the thunder of the ghoul-eyed guardsman's drum.' In the longer poem are such haunting phrases as ' shells scattered by the lucid-watered sea ; ' ' the small drums that grate on the ear '; ' the old settled homes which have never known hunger ' ; the cunning *vālai* fish, scared by ' the trembling shadow of the cane at the water's edge ' ; ' the tower that looks like a prop to keep the heavens from falling ' ; the world ' clad by the seas that smell of flesh, and capped by the sky ' ; the Gangā tearing down the Himālaya, ' lighting it up with its silvery billows.'

The simile is the favourite figure of speech of all Indian poets, and Rudran-Kannanār shows himself singularly apt at it. In his work, as in that of others of those days, there are to be found stock similes such as the elephant's ' drum-like legs ' and the ' lotus-like' breasts of women. But, as a rule, they are fresh and bright from the mint. In *Pattina-p-pālai* he rarely goes in for elaborate comparisons. The gory battle-field scene above referred to, which is a marvel of compactness as well as of brilliant observation, occurs in the longer poem. Two such elaborate similes are to be found in *P.P.*; the striking comparison (ll. 215-220) of merchants from distant places living in the coastal city in amity with the local population, to the heads of a great clan living scattered in distant parts but meeting and fraternizing at a pilgrim centre ; and the equally vivid description of Karikāla's escape from his captors, comparing him to the elephant that batters and brings down the sides of the pit in which it is confined and gets out by filling it with the debris. But it is the short similes that are the most pointed ; for example, the moored ships heaving gently in the lagoons, compared to elephants tugging at their staples ; the pool within its high banks, likened to the moon within the

Makha constellation, (which perhaps he imitated from Valmiki, see R. VI. lxxi. 24). The fishing nets on the sands suggest shadows in the moonlight ; the busy customs men work without rest the day long, ' like the sun's horses ' ; the slim hands of the city women are like *kāndal* blossoms depending from the node (ll. 155-6). The inspired comparison of the traders to the central pin of the cart-yoke (ll. 208-9) says much in little.

In *P.P.A.* the poet is more lavish with his similes and more given to elaboration ; a singularly engaging example of this latter sort occurs early (see ll. 95-97). We are not only told that the stripes on the squirrel's back are like the white cotton showing on the cracked back of the green silk-cotton pod ; we are also invited to contemplate its airy grace as it swings high on the topmost bough in the swaying wind, suggesting the singular liveliness of the squirrel. But in this poem too it is the short similes that are most striking. You see the hare's ears that are rough like the back of the lotus petal, and limpet's fry that resemble beads of chank ; yeast-hardened curd recalls mushroom tops to the poet's mind. The comparison of the milk of the *śambā* berry daubed on the sheet-iron-smooth breasts of youngsters, to streaks of gold on the touch-stone, completes an unforgettable picture of those lively youngsters. The paddy stacks that stand like substantial ghosts ready to begin the *tunungu* dance (ll. 253-7), and the strings of emerald in the women's girdles (ll. 353-5) covered by their diaphanous garment, which recalls ' the mist among the slender boughs of the burgeoning cassia ', (the green buds resembling the gems), reveal that touch of the imagination which transmutes baser metal into gold. On the other hand, in the elaborate description of the *kurukkatti* flower, which is compared to spaghetti cake, you have an example of how this kind of straining for effect may be carried too far.

I have dealt rather more elaborately with this poet's art and style than with those of the *akam* poets, because by its very nature, *puram* poetry must depend for its effect on its rich evocation of the multitudinous variety of life. When to this is added a romantic temperament like Rudran-Kannanar's, which contrasts notably with the classical restraint of Nappūdanār and Nakkīrar, you have poems where the fancy is as lively as the observant eye is busy sorting out and recording its impressions.

ONE MINSTREL TO ANOTHER[1]

Midsummer ; from the spacious firmament
The many-rayed sun, having swallowed up
The all-pervading darkness and spawned the day,
Burns and sears.

Wherefore, bootless flittest thou, O singer
With the *yāzh* under thy left arm pressed to thy side—
Its skin-cover red as the inside torn
Of the large-petalled, bee-haunted bloom
Of the thick-trunked *pātala* tree that has shed
Its green leaves ; its dense hole with twin eyes
Like the big-boled areca's lovely green spathe[2] ;
The cover itself sewn smooth like metal cast ;
Its tongueless mouth dark-hollowed like a dried-up spring ;
Its curved end-support like the young horned moon ;
Its supple braided thongs like narrow bracelets
Crowding the slim forearm of maiden
With rounded shoulders like the bamboo tall ;
Its stout stem of a streaming sapphire blue,
And strung gut twisted smooth like molten gold—
Thy looks so wan, thy tongue contemning[3]
All thy garnered lore, while thy starved kin weep
At thy heels ; feckless to find a friend
On this cool, sea-girt earth, round which wheels right
The moon with the burning sun, like birds
That seek forlorn the fruit-tree laden
On hill-side enveloped in the steaming heat
That rises from the rain-starved earth.

We and our kin, a big brood with ancient hunger dark,
Are coming back from him who pours his gifts
Like the rain-cloud in the famine-stricken wilds,
Making all that lives send up shouts of joy,
Loaded with wealth which, gift we as we will,
Grows no smaller—taking all we could
Of white-plumed horses gay and elephants stout.
If thou wouldst seek this scion[4] of the wave-borne line,

Whose Liege-lord,[5] sea-hued, covered with one step
The wide world, and bears on His breast th' auspicious mark;
Who, like the right-whorled *chank*, most prized of all
Shells scattered by the lucid-watered sea,
Is most esteemed among the Monarchs Three[6]
Whose trumpets voice their mighty armies' vow
To put down evil and righteousness exalt,—
Him, Iḷan-tirai of the many-speared host,
I sing; listen, and may thy travail cease.
In the wide realm he guards no robbers thrive,
Who loot and strike down screaming wayfarers—
(That's all the tilth *they* practise for a living !)—
Nor lightning strikes, nor serpent kills,
Nor wild beasts harry; therefore go,
O prince of beggars, resting where thou tirest,
Stopping when thou wouldst—and may thy heart rejoice !

The salters' caravan

The salt-seller's cart cuts a deep rut as it moves;
Its hub, round as a drum, hewn of a whole tree,
With spokes in fat felly bedded, that keeps them straight;
Its strong floor mounted on two stout spars like elephant-staples;
Its hood of rushes, like the rain-cloud on a hill.
Before the hen-coop on the roof, like the raised look-out
For the watcher who keeps the elephant off the corn,
Dangles by a cord let through a hole in its side
A small mortar, shaped like the knee of the black she-elephant
With tusks like bamboo shoots. And on the shaft, to which is lashed
The vinegar[7] pot, tight-strapped like the sweet-toned drum
Of the dancer on the dancing floor, sits the salter's wife,
With babe in arm, driving the bullocks with raps on the back.
The salters, adorned with garlands of leaves
In which the neem[8] that blooms in bunches on the bough
Has pride of place, unlettered men, strong and sinewy,
With well-knit shoulders, stout and shapely, walk by the cart,

Keeping it in its track ; the oxen[9] move orderly,
Close-hitched by stout cords slung through little holes in the round yoke.
They call out the price of salt, as with their many cattle
They go on that long road, that winds through villages,
And make it safe for those who fare forth by day.

Merchant Travellers

With them go men from distant parts, who ply a thriving trade
In things that all men prize, got from the mountains and the seas,
Exchanging them for what is rich[10] and rare. Clad in jackets,
And wearing shoes, they move on sturdy legs ; their breasts show scars
Of arrow wounds from encounters that foiled the foe.[11]
From the striped sash worn across the chest, like serpent crawling
On mountain-side, hangs the white-hilted flashing sword.
A dagger is struck in the tight-drawn belt.
With shoulders broad and strong, that have set at naught
The black bow's vaunt,[12] and a power of rescue
Like that of Muruga Himself of the *kadamba* tree,
Divinely tall, they with the spear grasped in their big hands
Have never fled the foe. They crowd with droves
Of donkeys with cocked ears, on whose backs, strong and scarred,
Lie loads of pepper of even weight on either side—
As jack fruits big, with kernels large and few,
Hang from the thick, bent trunk, not far from the ground—
Along the wide forest ways, where tolls are levied
At the cross-roads, in hamlets guarded by bowmen bands.

The Jungle-dwellers

There you will see the hunter's hut, with its tall ridge and roof
Like the porcupine's back, thatched with the fleshy *eendu* leaf
With spear-sharp point and a spine like the ribbed sea-sand,
Barring the entry of rat, and squirrel with stripes

Like the white cotton showing on the cracked back
Of the fair green pods on the long-boled silk-cotton's swaying boughs.
Their[13] womenfolk, all but the mother who lies
Huddled with her new-born babe on the deer-skin bed,
Go out and turn the sod in the black fallow land
With chisel-sharp flints fitted with wooden handles,
Stout and strong and iron-shod, and scour in the dust,
Scooping up the fine grass rice[14] that they find there.
This the women with the gleaming teeth pound with their pestles,
Short and strong, of full-grown timber, in the pits
Dug in their courtyards, mortar-like, under the shade
Of the wood-apple with its sides worn thin
From the tethering of the decoy deer. They collect
The brackish water in their deep wells, scraping in their bed,
And boil in it the unwashed rice, in an old pot
With broken rim, on the hobless oven. Tell them,
' We are the bards of the lord of victorious fighters
Who sport the fadeless *thumbai*,[15] whose hosts never flee the foe,
Who rules the fair mountains, and wears the hero's anklets',
And they will heap the rice high on teak leaves,
Like offerings to the gods, with salted fish, so you may feed
With your parched kin to your heart's content.
Along the confusing[16] track of the deer lie
The deepened water-holes, where water may be found
When the rains fail. The fierce forest-folk at night
Hide in the covered pits[17] around them, waiting for the boar
With tusk like the curved *agatti* flower. Should they not go
On this nocturnal hunt, they will engage by day
In hunting the long-eared hare, with ears like the back[18]
Of the lotus of the prickly stalk ; beating the green bush
With their gaping dogs, they catch them as they run
Into the linked nets stretched across the gap in the hedge,
And devour them there in company.
Beyond this waterless waste
Lie the fastnesses of the forest chiefs,[19] with houses broad,

Where spears smelling of human flesh, their points blunted
Spearing the terrified foe while vultures hovered overhead,
Are ranged with wooden shields decked with round beads,
And arrows with leaning bows, with their strings knotted on top.
On the high outer walls the broom grows; from pavilions
Raised on stout poles hang the small drums that grate on the ear.
And stacked within are arrow-bundles forked at the base,
Like the bee-hive on the hills. Dogs chained at the door
Secured with elephant-staples, and the tall gates,
Fitted with stout pikes, long and sharp, forbid easy approach
To the settlement guarded by the living hedge of thorn
And the woods with the watchmen's posts beyond.
If there you rest awhile, in every house you'll get
The red rice[20] boiled, that grows on uplands dry and looks
Like the *eendu* of the waste land, quite covered by the fry
Of limpet bit by coursing dogs, with eggs like beads of chank.

The Warrior Tribes

Neither the tusker's charge, nor serpent crawling over her,
Nor the din of thunder from the black cloud can unnerve
Even the wench big with child, so fierce and proud
Is the warrior[21] tribe that lives on the plunder
Its strong arm takes; their young chief, bearded like the pard,
With his men who shoot from the cruel bow as sure
As the hound that pounces on the prey, carries off
From the well-guarded land of the undocile foe
His cattle at dawn, to pay his old toddy debts.
Then they quaff the home-brewed liquor sweet from rice, and slay
The fat ram in their halls[22] and feast and dance the livelong day,
Lifting up the left shoulder, brawny with the bow's use,
And swinging to with a thrusting rightward motion,
To the booming of the drum covered withfolded hide.

Beyond these scenes of war and strife lie the shepherd homesteads.
Their little cots[23] have green-leaf bundles tied half-way
Up their short posts for lambs to feed ; before their low doors
Of close-packed wattle stretches the green brushwood.
The watcher's movable shelter, roofed with wattle
And *ragi* straw, contains the old man's[24] sheep-skin bed.
In the yard with its short pegs, to which the ram is tied
With long ropes, lie the sheep with crooked faces and the goats ;
And the farm, with heaps of dung, is ringed in with thorn.

The Cowherd and his wife

The cowherd's good wife is up with the birds at dawn
As the darkness disperses ; hurrying to her work,
She plies the churning rope that rumbles like the tiger's growl
And breaks the sweet yeast-hardened curd, cupped like mushroom tops,
And skims the butter ; then, resting on her head
Over a soft pad the pot whose mouth is flecked with dots
Of fresh butter-milk, she hies her to market.[25]
Comely she is, with little ear-rings swinging,
And her short hair in ringlets o'er bamboo-slim shoulders.
With the price for buttermilk she buys food for her folk.
But with her butter she will buy, not pure, solid gold,
But buffaloes with black calves and good kine. Should you stay
In the hamlets of the wry-mouthed cowherd, you will get,
With milk, the boiled green millet grains that lie discrete
Like the fry of the fecund crab.

The cowherd, with strong feet on which the constant sandal[26]
Has left its mark, and strong hand, axe-hardened, that grips the staff
The cattle dread ; his sturdy shoulders hairy and calloused,
Ceaselessly faring forth with twin loads[27] hanging from the ends
Of the balanced pole ; his hair with fragrant cow's milk washed ;

And on his neck a garland of wild blooms closely threaded,
Gathered from high bough and vine; clad in a single piece,[28]
He eats his milk and rice and abides in the woods
With the cows that yearn for their young.
On his flute with black holes made with a burning brand—
From the fire-stick, as he rubs, first comes the smell of smoke,
Then a thin wisp, and then the flame attests his victory—
He sounds the sweet strains of the *Pālai*[29] mode. Tiring perchance,
He make a bow-like *yāzh*, bending the hollow bough
of the *kumizh* tree, stringing it with flaxen strand,
And strums the *Kurinchi* mode on it, beguiling
The many-legged bees, who take it for the humming of their kind.

Garden lands

Beyond these wide, grass-filled pastures, with thorn trees all around
Are hamlets with byres and court-yards, in which stand
Bins as big as she-elephants, and grinders[30] like elephant's legs
Fixed in the ground neath pavilions, and byres filled with smoke,
Their long walls pitted with the marks of leaning ploughs
And squat cart-wheels, and comely houses roofed with *ragi* straw,
Like black clouds scattered in the rain-filled sky.
There you will get boiled *ragi* that grows on its short stalk,
The little discrete grains like the long-bunched silk-cotton bloom,
Tasty with the boiled pulse, copiously mixed,
Of the *avarai*[31] vine that's brown as the *kino* flower.
Going thence you will come to the hamlets
Of the ploughmen who turn their furrows o'er and o'er again,
Whose huts are full of grain. They yoke in the yard
Big bullocks well broken to the plough, and plough
The adjoining garden-land round, pressing the plough down,
Its mouth, curved like the she-elephant's, plunging to the full

The ploughshare, limpet-faced, then sow and hoe.
The din they make at harvest-time affrights the quail,
Short-legged and black in the neck ; thence to the woods
She flies, hugging her helpless, unfledged chicks
That look like the fragrant white *kadamba* flower.

A Prosperous Peasantry

Beyond lie the broad and fertile fields of arable land[32]
Where buffaloes with mud on their horns from the holes
They have destroyed—prising out the green reed clumps—of the crab,
Bow-legged like the blacksmith's tongs in the smithy
Where he presses with his legs the soft-skinned bellows,
Fall to fighting among themselves, kicking up
The unploughed dirt the ploughmen smooth by stamping.
Should they tire of the thick-stalked, honey-sweet *neidal* laid
By weeders on the ridges of the long water-filled fields
Planted with seedlings tossed to them in bunches,
The handsome urchins, fathers' darlings of those men
Who work with strong hands, their skins soft and wrinkle-free
Like sheeted iron, cover their black, lousy heads
With wreaths of the *mulli* flower, black and wry-mouthed, that hangs
From the bent stalk with leaves on the bud-fringed thorny bough,
Threaded on the twisted fibre of the well-chewed sedge,
And daub their breasts with the milk of the crushed *śambā* berry
That looks like streaks of gold on the touchstone.
Should they dislike cold rice with lumps in it,
The din they make with the pestle, husking the parched grain
In the yards of the low-roofed huts thatched with new straw,
Frightens away the hook-billed parrots from their haunts nearby.

In the fields rich with foison all the year round,
When the ears sag on their stalks and the grain is red ripe,
Of the big red paddy crop, like swarms of stinging wasps,[33]
The reaper reaps the sheaves of hollow-rounded stalks
And piles them high in stacks on the wide threshing floor

Where alms are given in the shade of the lofty boughs
Of the snake-haunted myrtle. There they stand,
Filling the floor, their sides covered with cobwebs,
Like a company of handsome spirits[34] ranged in a row,
Clad in silver gauze, dancing the *tunungu*[35] dance.
The huge stacks are tumbled down on their broad base,
And the yoked cattle, treading, free the grain of straw and chaff.
Well-dried, 'tis winnowed by the hand against the western breeze,
And in high mounds it rises, in splendour surpassing
The red-gold mountain[36] of the North in those solid farms
Of the land of the well-tilled glebe.
Close by the house
Is the stall with a row of pegs to which are tethered
By head-ropes the little wobbling calves of cows that have mated ;
And bins unchanging, like confirmed spinsters, their upper slopes,
Above the bulging middle, taller than ladder's reach,
In which is stored the grain of many harvests,
Poured down the hole at the top. In their handsome homes
The children, trundling round trim little toy carts on uncertain feet,
A carpenter's[37] child might envy, throw off their weariness
Drinking at the full breasts of their buxom nurses,
As they snuggle to them, and fall asleep on their beds.
Should ye stay in one of these large and prosperous places,
With their old settled homes which have never known hunger,
You will get the fine white rice th'unresting ploughman has won,
With the fried flesh of the domestic hen.
As in the clustered hills where the bamboo grows
And the rain-clouds play, the large elephant herd,
Harried by the lion, might trumpet in their agony,
So is the incessant din[38] of the cane-grinders' mills
In the smoke-filled sheds where the juice is boiled.
And of that juice you may drink freely if you wish.

The Fishermen

In the fishermen's huts, with narrow sloping roofs
Of wild cane laid across the white tree boughs,
Bound with screw-pine fibre, and covered with reed,
Stand the fishing baskets in the yard strewn with sand,
And covered with a *pandal* of the bent-stemmed *punnai's* boughs,
On which are trained the vines, with many a vegetable
Hanging from them. Here gather young and old with their kīn ;
And all, even the children joining, get into the pond,
Deep and dark, where the red-striped herring, like arrows
Smelling of flesh, glide with the bow-shaped green carp,
And catch them. The longest summer sees no diminution
In their well-guarded drinking pools, so deep that folded palms
Raised over the head will not be seen. Should ye seek
The homes of those fishers with sloping caps who fish with nets,
Weak from hunger, you will get fresh fish broiled,
With fragrant liquor,[39] which they make from the goodly broth
Of unpounded broken rice, cooled in broad platters,
Then mixed with powdered paddy sprouts, shiny like the wax
Found in the termites' nest where snakes have their lair,
And left, for sweetness, standing o'er for two whole days and nights,
Then boiled in strong-mouthed jars and passed through the palm's web,
Well-stirred with the fingers, pressed, and poured out warm.
The angler of the bardic tribe,[40] well-skilled,
His green leather bag with fresh meat[41] slung over his shoulder,
Sees his long bamboo rod shiver as the bent hook
On the firm-wound line comes free, the gape-mouthed *vālai*[42] escaping
With the bait that had covered it. But it is scared
By the trembling shadow of the cane at the water's edge

In the long ponds too deep for wading, where one must swim.
Pluck not, nor wear the lotus[43] bright that burns on the water,
For the gods love it, and you must cherish it.
Like the stringless rainbow seen in the wide and lofty sky,
The frame of all that is, when the rain drops cease,
Are the lac-red water-lily and the blue,
And many a flower of varied hue that blooms
At dawn in those ponds dark with old water ;
These you may get from them that gather them,
And deck yourselves with them.

Brahmana settlements

With sleek calves tied to their short *pandal* posts
Are the comely homes where the gods are worshipped,
Of those who treasure the Vedic lore. Cleansed with cowdung,
Nor cur nor domestic fowl may enter there,
Where the bent-billed parrot learns[44] the Vedic chant.
Chaste as the little fish[45] in the vast northern sky
Is the dame of the house, with a lovely forehead,
And bracelets on her arms. Should you tarry there,
She will at sundown give you rice of six months' growth
That bears a bird's name[46], well-cooked, with pomegranate sour, sliced
And fried in butter from the fragrant buttermilk
Of the red cow, and the unripe fruit of the mango
With powdered pepper variously pickled,
And garnished with the *karu-vembu's* aromatic leaf,
And much else that you will relish.
The fish-shaped ear-ring,
Made of gold, dropped at the water-ford[47]
By one of the sportive crowd of bathing women,
Is carried off by the king-fisher, sapphire-blue,
Mistaking it for prey. It takes it, not to its own spathe
On the bird-haunted palm, but to the top of the post[48]
The sacrificers, men of Vedic learning, have raised,
Discharging an onerous debt, whence it gives out a mild glow,

Like the swan-shaped lamp in the poop of the Yavana ship,

Or the morning star high in the heavens.

A Seaport

Reaching the outskirts of Neer-pāyaṛṛurai[49]
You will see the seaside crowded with ships that have brought
Milk-white steeds with plumes on their heads and the luxuries
Of the North, and sandy streets with lofty merchant houses,
The crowded haunts of seafarers, the high-walled ware-houses
Guarded by workers, and hospitable homes full of food,
Where the plough-bullock is kept away from the cows,
While the ram and the dog wander at will everywhere.

Womenfolk of the merchant class

The women decked with jewels, solid and spherical[50],
With strings of emeralds on their loins, covered
By fine linen gently heaving, like the mist
Among the slender boughs of the burgeoning cassia,
Walk like the peacock in its feathered glory
Delightedly cawing on the high hills,
Or to the tinkling of their red-gold anklets play,
Hitting the stringed ball, on the lofty terraces
Of their sky-topping mansions ; and when they tire,
Gently throw the golden 'kazhal beans' on the pearly sand,
The narrow bracelets on their wrists quivering as they move.

Should you rest awhile near the city, you will get,
In the yards stripped of grass and strewn with red flowers,
Of the drink-shops with green creepers over the door,
Where all may freely enter, the genial juice
Of the palm with the fat flesh of the short-legged hog
Fattened on rice flour, and confined in a pit
To prevent its mating with the hairy sow
Wallowing with its black numerous litter in the mire
From the dripping vats the toddy-making women wash.

Leaving the port with its lighthouse behind,
Whose tower, roofed with mortared brick, not thatch,
Looks like a prop to keep the heavens from falling,
So tall it is and hard to scale, though laddered,
And the mighty beacon lit on it calls home
The ships that lose their way on the wide sea,
You will come to the homes, each standing in its own grounds,
Of husbandmen who tend the groves. Thatched with the dry frond
Of the cocoanut palm that looks like the striate hide
Of the mountainous elephant with mortar foot-prints,
They have turmeric in the front yard and fragrant flower gardens.
Should you tarry there, you can have your fill
Of the ripe jack that grows in bunches low on the trunk,
A big fruit, all luscious kernel, and the water sweet
Of the tender cocoanut, and the white fruit,
Ripened on the bunch, of the plantain, curved
Like the tusks in the jaw of the big she-elephant
With the forked udder, and the fruit of the palmyra
Of the massive butt, and much else that is sweet.
Should that satiate, you can feed on the sweet potato
And such other tubers, that have put forth sprouts.

Vishnu's shrine at Tiruvehkā

Going along the tree-shaded track that lies
Through hamlets rich with new gains every year,
Where the thick-boled areca looks like the dark streak
Descending from the cloud in the rainy day-sky,
And from the cocoanut[51] trees around fall the big nuts
With their three-sided angular base, rocking the rice pot
The stranger has set to boil, and assuage his hunger ;
Passing through fine cities, whose sky-kissing mansions
Stand behind high walls, and many a fair region
On whose unforced bounty thrives the fadeless Valli[52] dance,
Ye will reach the shrine[53] where the auspicious Great God sleeps
On His serpent couch, like the elephant on the lovely hill
Under the *kāndal* with its long-bunched flowers.

In its dense-leaved copses, where the sun does not enter
And the koel can only insinuate itself,
The striped flower, with spotted back, of the green-leaved,
Long-tendrilled *kurukkatti* that clings
To the short-stemmed *kānji* tree, lies thick on the water
In the shadowed sand-pits, like string-*appams*[54] floating in milk
In their black pots, which the sweetmeat sellers have baked
With boiled jaggery and aught else to please the palate.
In the river-gardens cleansed by the stream at the flood
Are the resorts[55] of daylong delight, where ye may empty
The green leather bottles filled with toddy
That recall the bulging necks of the areca clumps—
Drinking and playing with the women whose bright foreheads,
With their fish-shaped ornaments, which draw the bees,
Look like the crescent[56] moon in the mouth of the red serpent,
While their eyes, so cool and lovely, are drunk with pleasure.
Then go and savour the beauty of spring at the ford,
Flower-filled, of the unfailing river that rivals
Heaven of ancient renown, which is so hard to gain;
And raise thy voice in praise of the Lord Almighty
Who there abides, and pluck the strings for a while
Of thy black-stemmed, sweet-toned *yāzh*, then go thy ways.

Kanchi, Ilan-Tirayan's Capital

And so to Kānchi, in whose groves the baboon dares,
Under the urge of her first pregnancy, to carry off
From the ground, when the mahout with the goad is too tired,
The big flour-balls, kneaded with ghee well mixed,
Placed there for the long-armed elephants in rut, whose rage
Is foiled by the strong staples of full-grown timber.
Worn out and pitted with the constant passage of heavy cars
Is the long street where the many clans of Maravas live,
Fighters of boundless fame who have never known defeat.

Such is the press of traffic that those who would buy and sell
Find it hard to make their way to the marts.
Flanked by its belt of defensive jungle is that City
Whose doors are never closed to those who seek the prize.
Lovely like the pericarp of the many-petalled lotus,
The navel of the dark-hued Lord, that bore the four-faced[57] One,
It has a citadel with lofty ramparts of burnt brick.
As of all trees with well-nourished, dainty branches,
Which fruit without flowering and are crowded with hosts of birds
That make a mighty buzz, the jack excels
By virtue of the size and sweetness of its fruit,
So of all Cities in the wide world, clad with the seas
That smell of flesh, and capped by the sky,
This place stands out by its ancient fame for victories
And the festivals it holds for men of every faith.
In this Kāñchi[58] lives the prince of givers, who celebrates
His triumphs on the very spot where he destroyed the foe
That fell on him furiously with a countless host ;
Like the five brothers[59], who fighting from their lofty cars
With lotus decorations, had emerged victorious,
The hundred having fallen on the field of battle,
Where rivers of blood carried away the carcasses
Of white-tusked elephants, which recalled the young moon,
Its arms, opened wide, holding a suffused radiance
Against a moving cloud in the scarlet evening sky.
Knowing his grace could protect those who sought his help,
As his enmity destroyed them that defied him ;
Having seen the ruined, empty halls in the realms
Of those who had warred against him, while friendly lands
Harvested gold, all those kings who owned him liege
—Both those that would gain his favour and those unfriended,

Who craved protection—flocked, as the hill stream hastes
To the sea, bringing it the bounty of the hills,
With undecaying wealth like elephants to the prosperous City ;
Thronging at the gate, waiting for their chance to enter,
As men who flee from peril slumber as they wait
For the boat that will ferry them across
The unfordable Gangā, scattering gold as it tears down
The lofty crest of the Himālaya where the gods dwell,
Lighting it up with its silvery billows.

The King in audience

In the council hall of the palace where wealth spills over,
And the pink-legged dove from its sweet sleep in the eves
Wakes frightened by the din of hammer on the anvil,
Swung by the lusty arm of the farrier, making fast
The bent ring on the long-trunked elephant's tusk,
Sits, with his circle of ministers unblemished
By cruelty—like the sun who rises from the waters
Charged with the triple task[60], in the eastern sea,
Earth's limit, and spreads his rays and makes the day—
The monarch who grants to each the boon he craves,
To those who seek redress and those who plead their lack,
And—a pleasing spectacle of rare discernment—
Knows without need of words what those he loves desire ;
Nor ever does his heart[61] shut to, the debt of largesse paid.

'[62]As the lion's whelp, having struck down the elephant
Whose mottled forehead attracts the shining bees,
Springs on the striped tiger, so having given the poets
Fine jewels and other gifts, thou didst destroy
The guarded ramparts of the foe and take the crowns of kings,
And scorned to make peace, though they sued for it,
Preferring to wrest the conqueror's crown
With thy mighty sword, and feed on the spoils,
O scion of the Tondai[63] race, esteemed of the brave,
O terror of the wicked, O thou that hast the opulent
Ever in thy debt, O warrior most famed. I've sung but a few

Of thy endless glories, O tireless giver,
Even as the she-goblin[64] does before the Goddess fair
For Whom the spirits dance the *thunungu* dance;
Whose blest womb bore that charming blossom, Muruga,
Who slew the wicked Śūra[65] in the white-surfed sea.
May thou prosper long!" Thus singing, strike thy big *yāzh*,
And play as thou art wont to play, hugging it to thy side,
And raise thy voice in praise, and worship with thy hand
The god[66] who rules the *yāzh*, even as thy fathers did.
Hardly has he seen thee standing in the throng
When he, who has at heart the good of all this pleasant earth
Known by the *jambu's*[67] name, will summon thee to his side.
For he has pondered long the truth that in this fleeting world
Nothing lasts but fame. And he will make thee cast away
Thy moss-like tatters and don with thy large and swarthy kin
Garments of fine linen white as the cream on milk.
Flesh of many kinds, chopped and minced, and full succulent,
Cooked by the master cook whose hefty hand's calloused,
Wielding the chopper, and cooked rice in plenty,
Unbroken, sifted by the hand, of the rich red paddy
Dried in the sheaf, and nectar-like dainties of divers kinds
—All well covered and carefully guarded,
And served in silver dishes like stars in the sky,
You will eat as he stands before you, eyeing each one
With a mother's love, and pressing you with kind insistence.
He will adorn your long black locks with a golden lotus,
Fire-born, which mocks the moon in the dark sky,
And which the bees do not haunt; while the dancers' tresses
Will be twined with garlands made of gold
Like lightning flashing on the raindrops from the streaming clouds

In the wintry day-sky, that have drunk of the mighty sea.
He will give you a chariot, fleet as the wind, drawn
By four horses, a splendid team adepts in horse-lore praise,
White-maned like the chank that grows in the Great God's Milky sea. 535
Nor will that slake his thirst for giving ;
He will present you with war-horses that tread the air
And leather saddles the routed foe has left behind,
Who had challenged his might. With these and other gifts,
He will send you home the same day[68] that you sought him—540
He, the rightful ruler of the famed Vengada[69] hills,
Bright with their flashing brooks, on whose slopes dwell the gods,
And the Kinnaras sing their songs to pleasing measures ;
Where in the dense copses the peacocks dance
And the forest glades are strewn with flowers shaken down 545
By the leaping langurs ; while in the yards of hermitages,
Where the baboon sweeps the floor and tiger and deer sleep,
The hermits tend the fires without a break with twigs
The white-tusked elephant has snapped and laid at their feet.

NOTES

1. The title of the poem: This is one of the five poems of the *āṟṟup-padai* class included in this *Pattup-pāttu* collection. A minstrel, who has been munificently rewarded by Tondaiman Ilan-tirayan, Ruler of Kanchi, tells another poverty-stricken minstrel, an expert in playing on the ' big Yāzh ', with many dependants, to go to Kanchi. In describing the route, the poet gives vivid pen-pictures of the different regions and peoples whom the minstrel will see on the way. He manages to touch upon the characteristic traits and occupations of the people and the physical features and social conditions of the regions comprised in all the five ' thiṇais.'

2. The hole was in the leathern cover. For a description of the Periyāzh see Thiru Vipulananda Adigal's *Yāzh-Nool* (Tamil).

3. Apparently he is blaming his folly in having wasted a life-time following an occupation which cannot give him food. cf. Theocritus's *Sixteenth Idyll.*

4. 'This scion' : Ilan-tirayan. (lit. the 'young wave' or 'wavelet') was a cadet of the Chola dynasty. Legend has it that he was born to a Nāga princess of the nether-world and entrusted by her (as advised by her husband) to the care of the waves, after putting a garland of the *thondai* creeper round his neck. He was safely landed in the Tondai country (the modern Chingleput district of Tamil Nadu). He founded a subordinate Chola dynasty (which preceded the Pallavas). Besides being a munificent patron of the arts, he was a poet in his own right.

5. 'Liege-lord' : Mahā-Vishnu, the second member of the Hindu Trinity, Who is described as being sea-blue in colour and wearing the Śrīvatsa mark on His breast. Ilan-tirai was apparently a devout Vaishnavite ; the Vishnu temple at Tiruvehkā (the modern Vishnu Kanchi) is described later in the poem.

6. The Chera, Chola and Pandyan Kings, who ruled in different parts of the Tamil country and were constantly at war with each other.

7. 'Vinegar' is one of the meanings of 'kādi' ; but the commentators take it in this context to mean 'pickles'

8. N. takes the reference to the neem as indicating that sprigs of neem were kept by the mother with her babe to ward off evil spirits, as the neem is believed to have that power.

9. They take with them more than one pair of oxen to relieve the burden on the animals.

10. 'What is rich and rare' : N. takes this to refer to food-grains and provisions.

11. These were the armed highwaymen who infested the roads.

12. 'Black bow' carried by the robbers. They saved their goods from the marauders, or retrieved them if they were taken. They are in this respect compared to the god Muruga (Who is supposed to be present in the *kadamba* tree), because He rescued the gods and their possessions from the *Asuras*. 'Meelimai' (translated as 'power of rescue') is taken by N. as meaning 'comparable to Death itself'.

13. These were jungle-folk known as Einas, living in the scrub with little or no water and making a living by hunting and trapping animals. The region they lived in corresponds to the notion of *pālai*.

14. The commentators suggest that it might be paddy grain, which the industrious ants had gleaned and brought from more prosperous areas.

15. 'Fadeless' *thumbai* : Apparently a flower made of gold ; *thumbai* is a small white bell-like flower.

16. N. suggests that the track is confusing to the deer ; others suggest that strangers, who take it for a regular road, later find it comes to a dead end.

17. The pits dug round the water holes were big enough for the hunters to slink in and at the same time leave room enough to be a trap for the unwary boar which falls into it through the flimsy covering.

18. The similarity is in the roughness of the skin of the back of the hare's ear, and of the backside of lotus petals.

19. These are apparently fortified watch-posts manned by the petty chiefs of the Einas above-mentioned, who looked after the jungle-belt that surrounded a ruler's territory, serving as one of the four defences—see Note under *Mullai-p-pāttu*.

20. Note the implied suggestion that it is an arid waste where no fine rice can be grown.

21. These are of the class known as 'Maravas' or 'fighters', who were the steel-frame of the Tamil armies. In peace-time they lived mostly by forays on each other's territory, cattle-lifting being their main business and strong liquor their principal weakness.

22. 'Halls' were community centres where feasts etc., were celebrated.

23. These were apparently the sheep-folds which, following the exigencies of available grazing, moved from place to place in summer; during the rains the sheep returned to the protection of the villages.

24. It was old men who were generally past work that were appointed watchmen. While the poem goes on to describe the cowherd, his stay-at-home housewife, and the cow-settlements, shepherds as a separate class are not described.

25. The cow-settlements are located in the pasture-lands at the foot of the hills.

26. 'constant sandal': Because he has to tread jungle ground full of thorns and sharp stones most of his working hours; cf. Theocritus's *Fourth Idyll.*

27. Carrying his scanty personal belongings and such implements as would be needed to procure fodder etc., for the cattle.

28. He either does not care, or cannot afford a second piece of cloth, to cover the upper part of the body.

29. The different regions had their different typical musical modes (known as *panns* in Tamil, corresponding to the classical *ragas*). The musical scale 'Pālai', comprised a number of modes, like 'Panjaram.' And so, too, the Kurinji scale.

30. These lands, though under the plough, had not water enough for rice cultivation. They grew cereals like *ragi.* The grinders were for grinding corn.

31. This is the field-bean, which is a popular vegetable in the Tamil country.

32. After the peasant villages in the *mullai* region, we come to the arable lands of the *marudam* region and the prosperous peasant villages mainly growing rice.

33. The stinging wasp is smaller than the black, and red in colour.

34. Especially when seen in the misty early dawn, these stacks, covered with cobwebs, have a ghostly appearance which the poet aptly describes.

35. The *tunungu* dance was danced by seven dancers standing in a row, and swaying with a sidelong movement, their crooked elbows smartly and rhythmically slapping against their sides.

36. Mount Meru of mythology, believed to be all of gold.

37. N. describes the children as the children of carpenters and as making such toy-carts for sale!

38. The vividness of the description of the unseen mills recalls the scene of Don Quixote's tilting at the wind-mills at night.

39. Look at the loving elaboration of the drink-making, which might come straight out of a brewer's recipe-book! With this description of the fishing villages, the poet touches on the *neidal* region.

40. The 'paaṇars' or minstrels did not all earn a living by singing or playing. Some fished, others begged. They were regarded as low caste; which makes the hospitality shown to them by all classes and conditions the more notable.

41. 'Fresh meat'. For bait.
42. Note how canny in an emergency the fish is, yet so timorous before an unknown enemy.
43. As the gods are supposed to live in the lotus flower, it should not be soiled by being worn by men but used in worship.
44. By dint of hearing the constant chanting.
45. 'Little fish': This is the star 'Arundhati', which is so small that it is not detected easily in the group of the Great Bear. Arundhati, the wife of Vasishta, one of the Seven Sages, is the prototype of female chastity and fidelity.
46. This paddy is called 'Garudan-*śambā*' in Tamil, Garudan being the great eagle which is the mount of Vishnu. Taking six months to grow and ripen, it is of fine quality.
47. The sea-port and the coast bring us to the *neidal* region proper.
48. The sacrificial stake to which the animals are tied.
49. This is the modern Mahābalipuram made famous by the (later) Pallava rock-cut temples and sculptures. 'Jala-śayanam' is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Tamil name used by the poet. (whose literal meaning is 'the Lord who lies on the water'.) The temple to Vishnu here is called the *Sthala-śayana-p-perumal* temple, the change in name having apparently been made at some period later than the poem. The present shore-temple (much of which is under water) was built by the Pallavas and is called *Jala-śayanam*.
50. 'Jewels solid and spherical': A significant detail; these jewels were more notable for the quantity of gold they carried than for their artistic quality. The emphasis is throughout on the wealth of the trading class. Even in 'playing with kazhal beans', they use not the common Molucca bean but gold pieces in the shape of those beans.
51. Even the cocoanut trees are hospitable (such is the pretty conceit) to the wayfarer; while they merely rock his rice-pot without further damage (though N. actually takes it that the rice-pot did tumble down), they give him ready-made food and drink in the delicious cocoanut!
52. It probably means that unlike the *valli* creeper, which naturally fades and dries up, the popular dance that goes by that name flourishes in these prosperous regions.
53. The shrine of Vishnu in Vishnu Kānchi, known in the old days as Tiruvehkā; here the God is shown as lying down in yogic slumber on His couch, which is the body of the great serpent Sesha.
54. In spite of the poet's minutely detailed and loving description of the *string-appam*, by which apparently something like spaghetti is meant, it is not easy to identify it. Dr. Swaminatha Iyer's suggestion that it is the *idi-appam*, which is still the cheap and popular breakfast of the poor, must be accepted with reservation, as there is nothing 'stringy' about it.
55. The character of these holiday resorts seems to be left ambiguous by the poet, probably designedly. The women with whom the minstrels are invited to drink and make merry may be the actresses of their own company, or they may be lights -o'- love.
56. As no eclipse of the crescent moon is possible, this is taken as an example of what the Sanskrit rhetoricians called 'abhūta-upamā' (a simile without foundation in the order of nature).
57. Brahmā, the four-faced Creator, was born in the world lotus that appeared in the navel of God Vishnu, Who lay on the waters during the Deluge.

58. Kānchi, even in pre-Pallava days, was a centre of religious and educational work not only of the Brahmanas but also of the Buddhists and the Jains.

59. The Pandavas are 'the five brothers' referred to here.

60. 'the waters .... task': Creation, preservation and destruction are all represented here as the work of the waters.

61. He does not regard the giving of gifts or presents as a quittance; his bounty and friendship alike are interminable.

62. This passage is obscure. N. reads '*vaya-mān-kodu-vari*' and takes it to mean 'the striped lion-cub'. Tiru Somasundaranār, Editor of the T.S.S.M. Publications, rightly objects that lion cubs have no stripes. He interprets the passage to mean that the lion, after having proved its strength on the elephant, goes on to tackle a more formidable quarry, the tiger cub; which is hardly plausible, since no tiger-cub is stronger than a powerful elephant. The translation has opted for 'tiger' as a solution.

63. Apparently the name of the race was derived from that of the creeper that was hung on the neck of the legendary founder by his Nāga-mother.

64. Umā, Śiva's consort, and mother of the God Muruga, is attended by many spirits and goblins, as Her divine spouse is; and one of them is represented as singing Her praises in Her presence.

65. See *Tiru-murugāṛṛup-padai*, ll. 49-51.

66. The God, or rather, goddess is Mātangi, one of the divine attendants of Umā. The poet may have possibly had in mind the Supreme Brahma, One and Indivisible.

67. In Hindu cosmogony India is part of *Jambū-dvīpa*, one of the seven island continents, which has for its identifying mark an ancient rose-apple tree.

68. And not make him wait endlessly at the gate, as latter-day patrons are wont to do!

69. 'Vengadam': The modern Tirupati-Tirumala Hills, with the famous Venkateswara shrine.

TIRU-MURUGĀRRU-P-PADAI

This poem of 317 lines is attributed to Nakkīrar, the author of *Nedu-nal-vādai*. (For a discussion of its date and authorship see below.) It is in the form of an *āṟṟup-padai*, advice from one who has been relieved from distress and has prospered greatly, thanks to a generous patron, to another who is in need of succour ; he tells him to go to the same patron and thus find a lasting remedy for his ills. But, unlike in the four other poems of this genre included in *Pattu-p-pāttu*, the patron to be sought here is none other than the Lord Muruga and the prize to be won is nothing less than *moksha* or liberation from the transmigratory flux. It is thus in essence the teaching of a *guru* to his disciple ; and the poem has long been regarded by the Tamils as part of the canonical literature of Śaivism, being included in the Eleventh Book of the sacred texts known as *Śaiva-t-tirumurai*.

Subrahmanya, known also as Skanda and Kumāra, figures in Vedic literature, and a Kūmara cult has long been prevalent in other parts of India. But it is in the Tamil country that He has been the object of deep devotion to the masses almost ever since the beginnings of recorded literature, under the name of Muruga, which among other things means also ' beautiful '. Since it was the beauty of nature in all its aspects, in its untamed grandeur, as well as in the trim and orderly comeliness of field and farm, that evoked the passionate aesthetic response of the ancient Tamils, they identified Muruga with that beauty as the Omnipresent Spirit that pervades and inspires nature in all its moods and is graciously responsive to human prayers and aspirations.

He is represented as particularly partial to the hills ; and even among them He has His favourite resorts, where He is eternally present. The poem, after a brief prelude in which the high truth about the Lord—that He is none other than the Uncreated Light, the Upanishadic Brahma That baffles mind and speech—is proclaimed, goes on to elaborate on His pastimes ; for He is the eternal Playboy, to whom protecting the world against evil-doers and exalting the good is as absorbing a sport as it was to the Krishna celebrated by the

Gita and the *Bhāgavata*. Beautiful and terrible by turns, He is the lovely child that delights the heart of His devotee even while He effortlessly destroys the Asura chiefs. That triumph is celebrated in their characteristic ways by the dance of the heavenly nymphs and the grotesque and horrible revels of the ghouls on the gory battle-field.

But the Lord Muruga is above all the teacher of the saving wisdom. The guru tells the aspirant of the principal places where he may hope to realize the divine presence if his heart is duly prepared for it by austerities and meditation. These are Tirupparankunram and Tiruchīr-alaivāi, where He married His divine Consort Devayani, and His human spouse Valli respectively; Tiru-āvinangudi, where the gods and the sages wait upon Him petitioning for the release of Brahmā; and Ēraham, where the Brahmanas worship Him with silent prayers. While speaking of the second shrine above mentioned, the poet beautifully describes the significance to the worshipper of the six faces and the twelve hands of the Lord. He, whose heart inclined as graciously to the rude and simple worship offered Him by the primitive tribes of His beloved hills as to the most profound *tapas* of the enlightened, loves to romp on the hills, accepting the offerings of the 'spearman' and the Kurava woman, revealing His presence through their inspired utterances, chastising and comforting. The extraordinarily intense and impressive prayer of the devotee and the Lord's response follow. The last section of the poem deals with the hill stream tumbling down from an eminence covered with fruit trees of every description, which is identified by the name of 'Pazham-udir-śōlai' ('the grove where the fruits are ever falling ripe'), as also one of His favourite resorts.

Sangam literature is predominantly secular in character. It sings of love and war and is full of the *joie de vivre*. It observes nature with an acute and loving eye, the moving impulse being the desire to live in tune with it. It reveals a passionate attachment to the spirit of place, which is not at all incompatible with a generous humanity; it was an old poet of this age who proclaimed, 'All the world is my home and all men are my kin'. (See Introduction.) But underlying and sustaining this delight in the life of the senses was a profound faith in the Divine Providence and a devoutness of spirit which

was nourished as much by revelation as by natural religion. It is unnecessary to speculate here whether this governing impulse was native to the soil or whether it was the result of what has been called 'the Aryan influence'. The earliest literary documents show abundant evidence of that faith in God and the possibility of communion, which are the sources of spiritual renewal. The worship offered by the old women in *Mullai-p-pāttu*, the simple but impressive invocation of the Divine blessing in *Kurinchi-p-pāttu*, the worship of the one God conceived in many ways, to which the poet of *Pattina-p-pālai* makes explicit reference, and the present poem, in which devotion to God conceived in a particular form as Muruga, the Spirit of Beauty and Delight, is the central theme, all serve abundantly to show, as the great epic of Kamban of a later age does, that Tamil poetry at its greatest draws its inspiration from the perennial springs of the spirit.

While the religious theme dominates the poem and has determined its rather loose form, the beauty of the many memorable pictures it paints and the compactness with which it presents profundity of thought and intensity of emotion must not be overlooked. The loveliness of the early morning at Tirup-paran-kunram (ll. 77-82); the appearance of the saints who have 'noughted desire' and 'know what the merely learned do not know' (ll. 132-141); the splendid procession of the gods (ll. 152-164); the artless women of the hill-tribes who wear 'the tarn-blooms bee-haunted, teased open and so smelling with a difference' (ll. 204-211); the unlettered Kurava woman with her extraordinarily impressive though blood-stained worship, whom He elects for oracle (ll. 234-252); and the vivid snapshot of the boar scurrying to the rock-clefts with the bear of the curved foot-pads and woolly back, while the wild oxen bellow (ll. 324-327)—these haunt the memory. And into this bustle and tumult come floating the solemn strains of an exalted devotion and the response from within, the Lord's love that makes you

'seem to stand alone
As all that is in this wide world girt by the dark, changless sea'

AUTHORSHIP OF THE POEM

The authorship of this poem has long been debated among scholars. Though popularly attributed to Nakkīrar of the Sangam Age, who was also credited with the authorship of all the devotional poetry included in the Eleventh Book of the *Śaiva-t-tirumurai* under the name of Nakkīradeva Nāyanār, many scholars have now come to hold the view that the earlier Nakkīrar, who lived some time between 150 and 250 A.D., can be properly credited only with the authorship of *Nedu-Nal-Vādai* and the shorter lyrics attributed to him in the Sangam Anthologies. Mr. Vaiyapuri Pillai, who has paid special attention to problems of chronology, points out the many contradictions in the traditional accounts, which would credit the author of *Nedu-nal-vādai* with the authorship of not only the devotional poems but also of a work on Grammar and another, a commentary. Such inferences as may be legitimately drawn from the references to astronomical terms and to 'Yavanas' in *Nedu-nal-vādai* favour a much earlier date for that poem than for the others. Grammatical peculiarities in *Tirumurugāṟṟup-padai* also suggest that it must be at least some centuries later than the Sangam poetry. Above all, there is a world of difference between the atmosphere—secular, hedonistic and practical—that characterises Sangam poetry, and the devout religiousness of the devotional poetry. From all this Mr. Pillai concludes that the *Tirumurugāṟṟup-padai* was the work of a 10th century writer.

THE LORD THAT LOVES THE HILLS[1]

Like the sun sung by many, that rises in the eastern sea,
And, wheeling right, sails far above, gladdening the hearts of men,
Shines the uncreated Light[2] That glows in the heart
When the senses ten are stilled, and yet beyond its reach[3]—
And *That* is He Whose mighty feet sustain the suppliant,
Dispelling his evil past, crumpling up his ignorance.
His strong arm strikes like thunder, He, the spouse of the Goddess[4]
Spotlessly chaste, with her forehead fair; on Whose breast rolls
The garland of red blooms threaded, that look like chariot wheels,
Of the stout-trunked *kadamba* tree, so dense with leaves
It makes the cool and fragrant woods seem dark
Where the first rain-cloud big with water from the sea
Had poured, scattering its first large drops in the sun-and-moonlit sky.

The celestial damsels dance in Muruga's honour

On the sky-high mountain where the big bamboo grows
Dance celestial damsels[5] with bright feet wearing anklet bells,
Sturdy legs, and slender willow waist, and shoulders stout,
Clad in flowered garments of a natural red,
Like the *indragopa*[6]; wearing a seven-chained girdle
Strung of many gems, and jewels of *jāmboonada*[7] gold;
Possessed of a beauty which owes nothing to artifice,
And a brilliance of complexion that is seen from afar.
In their hair uniformly long, and oiled bright,
Their maids have stuck the blooms of the red-stemmed *vetchi*
And the petals of the fragrant, green-stalked lily,
And the jewels set in their proper places—
Sri-Devi[8], and the one shaped like the right-whorled conch—
And fixed on the fair and fragrant forehead, *tilak*-marked,

The jewel shaped like the shark's mouth agape,
And planted in their hair, gathered in a faultless knot,
The big cool *champak*, and o'er it placed a bunch
Of *marudu*[9] with petals dark without and bright within,
And on it wound strands of lovely red buds threaded,
That had on branches under the water grown.
With shapely ears from which the bright, well-matched *ashok* shoots
Dangle and caress the bosom adorned with exquisite jewels;
With young breasts, shaped like the silk-cotton's unfurled buds,
Daubed thick—as with the sweet-scented *marudu* bloom—
With the bright paste of fragrant, seasoned sandal,
Dusted with the fine pollen of the broad-bloomed *vēngai*,
And for greater beauty, speckled with bits of *vilavu* shoots;
Thus bedecked, they dance in that grove, singing in chorus,
And the righteous hill-side reverberates,
'May the flag that bears the effigy of the cock,[10]
And flying aloft in fair fight wins, prosper long'
The she ghouls celebrate His victory over Śūra.
On the hills adjoining, with trees so tall
That even the monkeys have not climbed them,
Grows the flame-like red *kāndal*, untouched by the bees,
Of which a large cool wreath adorns His crown.
His long, bright, broad-leaved spear had put the sea,
Hard-rocked and icy, in a turmoil and killed
Śoora[11], the Asuras' chief. She-ghouls with dry hair, uneven teeth,
Big-mouthed, rolling, hungry eyes and angry looks,
Ears that lies heavy on the big pap, with their load
Of pop-eyed owl and cruel serpent, rough bellies,
And a gait that rouses terror in the beholder,
Carry in big bangled hands with sharp-nailed, cruel fingers,
Bloody with gouging out the eyes, the black, foul-smelling heads
And shake their shoulders as they gorge the fat and dance[12]
The *tunungu* dance, singing the victory,

In fair fight won, when with His six-fold form
He had put fear into the Asuras' hearts,
Severing the huge body[13], part man, part beast, and felled
The mango tree with bunched flowers drooping down,
And thus annulled the Asuras' former gains.

The Lord Who grants knowledge and freedom

Such is the Lord Muruga of the bright spear,
Victor of righteous wars and measureless fame.
If[14] thy heart is ripe for the freedom that will take thee
To those blessed feet, and thou yearnest
For the lasting knowledge that is the fruit of devotion,
Thou wilt be blessed even now, thanks to thy fruitful past,
With that liberation sweet, longing for which
Floods the heart purified in many births.

His favourite resorts : Tirupparankunram

Far out the war flag with its challenge to the foe
Floats aloft, and by its side the knitted ball and doll[15],
And they keep suspended, as no foe dare beset
The gates of Madurai with its opulent fair-price shops[16],
And its tall mansions many ; to its west, amidst the fields,
Wide and black-loamed, grows the lotus prickly-stalked ;
In whose flower having slept the night,
And at dawn waked the *neidal* honey-sweet,
The swarm of fair-winged honey-bees finds, when the sun is out,
With joyous hum the tarn blooms that have oped like eyes awake,
In Tirupparankunram[17] ; and there He loves to dwell.

Elsewhere[18] He rides His elephant with the furrowed forehead,
Scarred from the sharp goad's jabs, with the heaving circlet of gold
And forehead-piece, while down its sides the bells alternate boom ;
Fierce its gait, and a strength like the god of death's,
Irresistible, and fleet as the wind when it runs.
Under the crown of finished workmanship fashioned
In five[19] different ways, with lovely gems of various excellence
Shining like lightning on his head, and the ear-rings,

Shaped like the fish, of gold superbly wrought
And dazzling as they dangle, like th' unchanging stars
That surround the moon as it shines from afar,
His lovely faces rise resplendent in the hearts
Of those whose *tapas*[20] consummated is with flawless rites.
One face has kindled many lights[21] to manifest
The world without flaw that had been wrapt in darkness.
One face, with love responsive to His lovers' praises,
Is zealous to please them, and of His love fulfils their lack.
One face works His will so sacrifices with spells
Offered by Vedic rule by Brahmanas are not hindered.
One face makes clear the mysteries[22] that baffle Scripture
To them who trust Him, as the full moon lights up the quarters.
One face destroys with vengeful wrath in battle
The evil foe, and thus performs the sacrifice of war.
And one face rejoices in the Kurava lass,
Valli, the modest, with a waist like the flowering vine.
While the faces six thus do their wonted work,
Of the arms—to which the three red lines of beauty reach
From the fair and spacious breast with its necklace of gold—
Strong and straight, famed for their prowess in hurling the spear,
One sustains the celestial *rishis* who live
In the upper air, while its fellow rests on the hip ;
One plies the goad, while its companion lies
On the thigh covered with the garment red ;
Two carry the fine big shield and the whirling spear ;
One is posed against the breast, as the signature of grace[23],
While the other, lovely, caresses the low-hung garland ;
One raised aloft, gesturing war, as the bracelets slip down,
While the other rings double strokes on the sweet-toned bell ;
One hand makes the black clouds give abundance of rain,
The other with the bridal garland invests the divine fair[24].
Thus the twelve hands do the bidding of the faces six.

As the celestial kettledrum booms, and the horn,
Strong and hard, blares piercingly with the white conch,
And the sturdy drum with the noise of thunder
Crashes, while loudly caws the many-plumed peacock
From His victorious standard, along the aery way
To Ālaivāi[25], sung by the good, He hastes,
For it accords with His pleasure there to dwell.

Elsewhere, you will see the sages, clad in bark, marching in front
With white tufts like the right-whorled chank in shape and colour,
Spotlessly clean, their bony fleshless breasts
Covered with the skin of the black antelope ;
Sages who forgo food for days together,
Whose minds are unclouded by difference[26] or cherished wrath,
Who know what the merely learned do not know,
And are the masters who set the norms for them,
Whose wisdom has 'naughted desire' and vengeful thoughts,
Whose minds are free from sorrow and from hate.
Celestials[27] follow them in spotless, steam-white robes,
With garlands on their breasts, of buds just opened ;
Soft-spoken, with voices musical, trained
To sing to the *yāzh* whose thongs and strings they have wound and tuned
By their subtle ear—these have come to pluck the strings,
With their flawless fair, who know no bodily ills
And are complexioned like the bright mango blossom,
And carry drones that flash like golden cases,
And over their undulating loins wear
Girdles of eighteen strands, a pleasure to the eye.

The gods petition Him for the release of Brahmā

Then comes the Lord on Whose long banner stands the bird[28]
With its curved and striped wings that kill the snakes
With poison bags behind their white, holed fangs,
And a cruel strength, like fire, that causes people dread ;
And the Lord[29] with the three unwinking eyes, Who burnt

The Cities-Three; the flag with the white bull on His right;
His strong arm many have sung, and by His side
Is Umā, part of Himself ; He contains contradictions ;
And the Lord[30] with the ten hundred eyes, fortune's favourite,
Who won his victories over the foes he slaughtered,
By offering a hundred sacrifices ; who rides on the neck
Of the elephant famed, with its four upturned tusks
And stately gait, its big trunk lolling on the ground upcurled.

At Āvinangudi

These have come down to this well-guarded earth,
Three of the four Great Gods whom many have sung,
Who have in their keeping the world with its cities fair,
To get the Four-Faced One restored to His high place,
Who sprang from the navel lotus and made the flawless world,
So that they too could turn to their appointed tasks.
Likewise, the three and thirty[31], who fall into classes four,
But who, though outwardly different, are not in essence so,
Thanks to their innate intelligence, and the twice nine[32],
High-placed, have gathered in the sky, shining like rising stars.
Theirs is the speed of the wind among the stars,
And the strength of fire when the wind is rising,
And voices like thunder when lightening flashes fire.
They have come to plead the lack that is their woe,
And ask for that which would their former state restore.
Where the Gods thus gather, in Āvinangudi,
He sojourns for a while with the dame divinely chaste.

At Eraham[33]

Faithful to the rule of the twice three duties,
Born of good parents on both sides,
In clans diverse and many, long settled there,
Spending the forty-eight[34] years of lusty youth
As Hoary Writ enjoins, the twice-born,
Who live by Dharma and are heirs to the wealth
Of the Three Fires, offer their devotions
At the appointed hours ; with the thread three-in-one,

Each of three strands, and their wet clothes drying on them,
Joining their palms over their heads in adoration,
They praise Him, murmuring the six-syllabled secret name,
And scatter sweet-scented flowers at Ēraham,
Wherewith much pleased, He loves to linger there awhile.

He loves the hills

And Thou shalt know He is present always in the hills[35]
Where the spearman, god-possessed, celebrates His festival,
Crowned with a wreath of evergreen on which are strung
Nutmeg and *takkola* with *veṇ-thāli* and the wild jasmine.
There the cruel hillmen, who draw the hefty bow to kill,
Their breasts bedaubed with bright red sandal paste[36],
Dance the *kuravai*[37] dance merrily, to the little drum,
Having with their kin from their highland hamlets drunk
The honey-mead brewed in the long bamboo tubes.
There, too, the artless women with the peacock's gait and charm,
Wait upon Him adorned with wreaths of tarn-blooms bee-haunted,
Teased open, and so smelling with a difference,
And different strands of other flowers twined in their hair ;
Their loins, with their well-wrought girdle-chains,
Covered by a waving garment of *ganjā*[38] leaves,
Big, cool, and fair, whose honey the bee sips, with its flowers,
And bunches of the red-stemmed *kadamba's* sweet white blooms.
Tall and fair, and clad in red ; with the cool shoots dangling,
Of the red-stemmed *ashok*, tucked behind the ear ;
Belted, with shoulder-rings, the hero's anklets on His legs ;
Decked with the wreath of *vetchi* blooms ; sounding the flute,
The horn and other small musical instruments ;
Riding the peacock, with the ram[39] by His side,

And the blameless cock-flag ; fine linen, cool and fragrant,
Worn over the waist-band and reaching down to the ground—
He loves to play[40] on every hill, as the women sing
With voices sweet as the music of strings,
Supporting on His sturdy arm, stout as the tabor,
And hugging to His side the women He exalts,
Timid as the doe, with shoulders slim and soft.
He is present at every village festival
Where the millet is offered in little pots, mixed with flowers,
And lambs are slaughtered, and in the cock-flag they invoke Him.
He is where His lovers praise Him and His mind inclines ;
Where the spearman offers Him worship with sacrifice ;
In wood and grove and river-islets fair ;
In river and tank and town and road-crossings ;
In the newly flowered *kadamba*, and the village tree
Whereunder people gather ; in public halls and sacred columns.

The God-possessed

Thick daubing[41] with white mustard and ghee
The flag[42] with the effigy of man's head and bird's body ;
Muttering under the breath the God's spell and offering worship ;
Strewing flowers ; wearing garments two and different,
One over the other ; binding the red thread on the wrist ;
Scattering puffed rice, and mixing with the blood
Of the strong ram with the stout shanks the pure white rice
And offering it as sacrifice in many a small pot ;
Sprinkling with green turmeric and other fragrant things ;
Hanging big garlands of cool red oleander,
With other garlands, cool-scented, of equal lengths ;
Invoking blessings on the good mountain hamlets ;
Offering incense, singing the *Kurinchi* mode—
The Kurava woman[43] strews many a red flower,
As with the loud noise of the brook the soft strings mingle,

And spreads the frightful red rice stained with blood.
And, as the instruments strike up that Muruga loves,
The God comes on her, putting fear into unbelievers,
In the great awe-striking fane[44]. Wherever He is thus invoked
With frenzied dance and song and the blowing of many horns,
And the clangour of curved bells, and men offer worship
With sublime assurance, like those whose prayers have been heard,
Praising his elephant mount,[45] there He is for sure: I speak as I know.

How to beseech His favour

When thou art fit to stand before Him face to face,
And He shows himself to Thee wherever He please,
Give Him glad looks, praise Him and sing Him,
With palms joined overhead, throwing thyself at His feet:
'Blest Lord, Whom One of the five received in his outstretched hands
And the six brought forth as six in the blue tarn[46],
Grass-grown, on Himavat, long and high!
O Son of the God[47] Who sits under the banyan tree!
Child of the lofty Mountain-king's Daughter[48]!
Death to Thy foes, Son of the Goddess of War victorious!
Darling of the fair-decked Dame, the Mother of the worlds!
Captain of the bowmen, whom the gods revere!
O Thou with the garland on Thy breast, Scholar and Poet,
One against the world in war, Destroyer ever-young!
The Brahmana's supreme blessing, sum of the wise men's words!
Bridegroom of the fair, Lion among the world of fighters!
Blest One, with the stout arm that grasps the spear,
Piercer of the Krauncha[49], Whose victory knows no wane!
Lord of the Kurinchi land with its sky-topping mountains!
Lion to those elephants, the much-praised poets of other faiths!

Muruga, Lord of the wealth that is so hard to obtain !
Thou famed for bringing the bliss of freedom
To those who long for it ! Child bejewelled That grantest
Thy grace to the broken ! Awe-striking Lord That wert death
To thy foes in many a fierce encounter ;
That takest Thy petitioners to Thy victorious bosom,
And grantest them their wish ! God of the mystic name,
Supremely great, that the gods and saints adore reciting !
Thou art known as Madavali since Thou didst uproot
Śūra and his clan, O hero, 'whelming in war !
O Lord and Master ! But all the praises I know and sing
Suffice not, since no soul may take Thy measure,
And so I came to seek Thy gracious feet,
O peerless Wisdom ! '
But ere thou speakest Thy heart's desire,
His servants many and different, dwarfs in size,
Appear luminous on the festival ground
And plead thy suit saying, ' This wise petitioner
Deserves Thy grace ; drawn by Thy teeming glory,
He is come, singing Thy praises sweet, fortifying faith.'
He of the godly strength and sky-topping form
Appears then to thee, His taxing divinity hid
Graciously, as the Divine Child of yore, exuding charm
And assures thee, ' Fear not, I knew you would come,
Seeking thy home ', and says many a kindly word
Showing His love—and so you seem to stand alone
As all that is, in this wide world girt by the dark, changeless sea—
And gives Thee that freedom[50] blest that's so hard to find—
He, Muruga, Lord of the mointain with its many groves
Of ripe fruit, wherefrom with a zoom descends the brook,[51]
Like many a white flag waving together,
Rolling down the eaglewood and the big sandal trunk,
Uprooting the bamboo small, its flowered top waving wildly,
Pulling down the wide bee-hive, cool and fragrant,
That looks like the sun's orb on the sky-high mountain ;
With the *āśini* jack's ripe kernels dropping into it,

And the sweet-smelling flower of the hill-top *śura-punnai* ;
Frightening the langur and the black-faced *muśukkalai*,
Chilling the big cow-elephant with its furrowed fore-
head ;
Bearing away the white, pearl-filled tusks of big elephants ;
Leaping down sheer, exposing the dazzle of gold and
gem ;
Washing down the gold dust, and by its onset snapping
Big plantain trunks, bringing down bunches of tender
cocoanut,
Which dash against each other as they are borne
away ;
Making the black bunches of pepper on the vine tremble,
And the strong hens run in a panic with the flocks
Of peacocks plumed, with their modest gait ;
Sending the male boar scurrying into the rock-clefts
With the bear of the curved foot-pads, whose woolly
back
Is black like the tender shoots, white inside, of the date
palm,
What time the lusty black-horned wild oxen bellow.

NOTES

1. The Title : The poem is in the form of an exhortation by a devotee of the Lord Muruga (or Subrahmanya, to give Him His Sanskrit name) to another who would seek His grace, to offer his devotions at the various shrines, especially on the hills, which He greatly loves. It describes His form and features, His consorts, mounts, banner and so on, His pastimes and exploits, and the different ways in which men with different backgrounds offer Him worship, and the catholicity of outlook He displays in accepting all genuine devotion ; and, above all, the ultimate truth about Him, identifying Him with the Supreme Godhead. But, unlike in the other *Ārrup-padai* poems, it is the name of the God that figures in the title of the poem and not that of the protege.

2. The Self-luminous Brahma, contrasted with the 'created light' of the sun.

3. An echo of the Upanishadic statements about the Brahma, Which is described as Purusha—'Who lies in the heart' and as 'That from Which speech returns baffled along with the mind'.

4. Subrahmanya (Who also figures in the Vedic pantheon as Skanda and Kumāra) is represented as having two spouses, Devayāni, a celestial, Indra'a daughter, and Valli, the daughter of a man, the King of a principality in the mountains of the South.

5. The goddesses, the sub-human ghouls and spirits, the hillmen on their hills, the sages, celestial and human, the great Gods, the Brahmanas, the dedicated ' spearman ' and the ' Kurava woman ', whom He fills with His afflatus and through whom He delivers judgement and administers comfort, are all described as worshipping Him in their different ways.

6. Something like the cochineal insect, but indigenous.

7. Jāmboonada, described as ' pure gold ', found in the Jambu river ; a pretty myth.

8. Śrī-Devi : Name of a jewel.

9. Myrtle ; for the names of the other flowers see Glossary.

10. Muruga's standard bears the picture of a cock ; another, that of His peacock-mount.

11. Śūra : The full name is Sūra-padmā. He was an Asura. He, as well as the Asura *Tāraka*, was slain by Muruga.

12. The ghouls are supposed thus to celebrate His victory over the Asuras on the gory battle-field.

13. Śūra was part man, part horse. The mango tree referred to here was a magic creation by the Asuras, which absorbed half the strength of every foe who attacked them.

14. Lines 66-71 represent the core of the teaching by the adept to the initiate. The aspirant to liberation has come to entertain that aspiration by reason of having over many lives discharged the duties laid on him by virtue of his *varṇa* and *āshrama* and thus purified his heart. Then the love of God grows in his heart as the result of worship and meditation. This leads him to yearn for the supreme knowledge that will bring freedom from the bondage of birth and death. Then Muruga, out of His grace, appears to His devotee, and as the Supreme Teacher, reveals that knowledge to him, and the devotee attains the Bliss of Moksha ; which (as one reading of the poem suggests, in accordance with the Bhakti tradition) is in fact neither more nor less than the Bliss he finds at His feet eternally.

15. The ball and doll were apparently hung up at the gates, and the foe who dared to attack the city might cut them down as a challenge. But as no foe dared to do this, because of the Pāndyan's power and prestige, they remained untouched.

16. ' Fair-price ' : I have employed current jargon to indicate the purport of the rather involved language of the original ; all that is meant is that the shoppers did not exploit the urgencies of their customers.

17. This place, which has a shrine for Subrahmanya on a hill, the traditional site of His marriage with Devayāni, is four miles to the west of modern Madurai.

18. This is the beginning of a long section devoted to the shrine at Tiruchīr-alaivāi (the modern Tiruchendur in Tirunelveli District), and its *puranic* associations. Subrahmanya is represented as having six faces, because He was brought up by the six star-deities of the constellation Krttikā (see Note below). The function of each face (or phase, as you might say, of the God's manifold personality and achievement) and the pair of hands that accompany it, are vividly described.

19. Five different diadems : Described in technical terms with which the reader need not be bothered.

20. ' Tapas ' : Austerities.

21. God, as the Author of the universe, has set up the luminaries, sun, moon etc., and given them their light.

22. Subrahmanya is represented as having expounded the mystic Aum to His father, the God Siva Himself.

23. Called the 'abhaya-hasta' in Sanskrit, the hand raised in a benedictory gesture.

24. Devayāni.

25. From here begins the description of Āvinangudi (the modern Palni Hills in Madurai Dist. of Tamil Nadu). It follows the puranic story, according to which the Creator Brahmā was insufficiently respectful towards Subrahmanya and so He threw him into prison. As that meant serious dislocation of the work of creation and consequently of the other world activities, which are interconnected, the other three of the Big Four, that is, Vishnu, Siva and Indra, are represented as waiting upon Muruga in this place and pleading for the release and reinstatement of Brahmā. The procession of the gods is preceded by that of the great contemplatives who have realised God.

26. It is the notion of 'difference' i.e., of duality, that is the parent of all fear, says the Upanishad.

27. These are the Gandharvas, the demi-gods who are the celestial musicians; their womenfolk, the Apsarases, are the celestial dancers.

28. The Garuda on the banner of Vishnu. He is the avowed enemy of the snake race.

29. This is Śiva of the three eyes Who destroyed a huge aerial vehicle built for the Asuras wherewith to harry the gods and plague the worlds. His flag bears the effigy of the bull, which is also His mount. His divine spouse is Umā Whom He has made part of Himself, giving her the left part of His body. He, the Supreme Lord, the Giver of all good, lives in the cremation ground, garlanded with skulls, and has ghouls for His attendants. These apparent contradictions confuse the undevout and the worldly.

30. This is Indra, King of the gods, who obtained his primacy by offering a hundred horse sacrifices. His elephant, called the Airāvata, came up from the sea when the gods churned it for nectar.

ll. 169-70. See note on l. 442 of *Perum-pān-ārrup-padai*.

31. The gods are represented as thirty-three in number (which in later mythology has swelled to 33 crores) and fall into four classes—the twelve Ādityas (of whom the deity of the sun we see is one), the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras and the two Maruts. Discharging separate functions, they are reckoned separately, but they are essentially one in nature, being pure intelligence.

32. These are the eighteen *gaṇas* (or group-deities), the gods, the Asuras, the Daityas, and so on.

33. Eraham is identified with the modern Swāmimalai, a village to the west of Kumbakonam in the Tanjavur District of Tamil Nad. Here the Brahmana devotees worship Subrahmanya with the recital of the *mantra* that invokes His grace. The six duties enjoined by the Veda on the Brahmanas are learning and teaching the Vedas, sacrificing and conducting sacrifices, giving gifts and receiving them in case of need.

34. That is, as bachelors, devoted to the study of the Veda and the practice of strict continence.

35. Here begins the long description of how the Lord accommodates Himself to the understanding of the common masses and the worship they offer Him. The 'spearman' carries a spear and is dedicated to His

worship. He is dressed and adorned in a particular way and invokes His presence on sacred ground where sacrifices are offered to Him.

36. N. says that it was the spearman who had daubed his breast with sandal paste.

37. Kuravai dance : This was danced by seven, eight and nine people taking hands ; the drum to whose accompaniment they danced was called the *Kurinchi-p-parai.*

38. *Cannabis indica,* from which bhang and other intoxicants are prepared.

39. Both the peacock and the ram figure as Subramanya's mounts.

40. It is not clear whether the poet means that the God Himself is physically present when partaking in these revels, or He does it in the person of the ' spearman ' whom He inspirits. Commentators differ.

41. The worship by the Kurava maid and her prophesying in her god-possessed state was prevalent in the hill hamlets, as well as the spearman's ministrations.

42. This represents the meaning according to one reading. It is said that such a flag is used to drive off goblins which might be tempted to take the offerings made to the God. There are two other variants, one of which would mean ' the mighty Cock-flag ' and the other ' the peacock flag '.

43. The text has actually a word which means ' town or city '. But some commentators explain that the temples on the hills where this worship is offered are referred to here.

44. The text has 'piṇi-mukam', which N. takes to indicate Muruga's elephant mount, as the term, which means 'head-plate', may be taken to refer to the elephant. Others prefer to take the word to mean the peacock.

45. ' The blue tarn ' called the ' lake of reeds ' : (' Śāra-vanam ' in Sanskrit) in the Himalayas. ' One of the five ' The God Who presides over elemental fire. The story of Muruga (Subrahmanya) is told with considerable variations in the epic Ramayana and the different Purāṇas. According to N., this poem follows the version according to which the God Siva, while engaged in connubial union with His Consort Umā, was requested by Indra not to deposit His virility in her ; whereupon Siva allowed Indra to take it. He gave it to the sages who passed it on to fire. The latter put it, much weakened, into the hands of the wives of six of the seven sages, who conceived and brought forth six children. When Indra, forgetting what he had done, tried to slay them, they all joined and formed one mighty warrior who put Indra to rout. Later, in order to slay Śūra-padmā, the *Asura* who harried the gods, Muruga assumed a form with six different faces and twelve pairs of hands, and as Commander-in-Chief of the gods, exterminated the Asuras. According to the Ramayana version, apart from other important deviations, the six star-deities of the Kṛttikā constellation were the foster-mothers who brought up the Divine Child born of Śiva's virility, which had been transformed into the lake of reeds.

46. Śiva, the father of Muruga, sits eternally under a banyan tree on Kailas facing south, as the primordial teacher of the knowledge that liberates.

47. Lines 265-267 of the translation speak of the Goddess Umā in terms of three of her relationships—as the daughter of Himavān, the King of mountains (and thus known as Pārvati), as Koṟṟavai, the Goddess

of war and victory, according to the Tamil tradition, and as the primordial Creatrix, the matrix of the worlds.

48. Krauncha : A mountain of that name. This was one of the exploits of Muruga. His retainers, like those of Śiva, are represented as groups of dwarf-like celestials.

49. Lest the worshipper should be overwhelmed by the revelation of His mighty Presence, He shows Himself to him in the charming guise of the Child Muruga.

50. This is the state of liberation from the shackles of egoism and the limitations of name and form, and identification with the Supreme Brahma.

51. Note the striking resemblance between this passage and those two passages in *Kurinji-p-pāttu*, which describe the chieftian's hill and the perils that beset the wayfarer there at night.

THE OTHER POEMS OF PATTU-P-PĀTTU

Three of the four poems of the *Pattu-p-pāttu* collection not translated in this volume are of the *āṟṟuppadai* class, and have thus a generic resemblance. The fourth, *Madurai-Kānchi*, is not only distinct, but also in a class by itself. It is the longest poem in this anthology, and celebrates Nedunchezian, the Pandyan, who is also the hero of *Nedu-nal-vādai*. In the battle of *Talayālan-kānam* he defeated the combined forces of his opponents. The author Mangudi Marudanār, his court poet, was a devotee of Siva. The poem not only describes vividly the wide realms over which Nedunchezian ruled, his exploits as a warrior and his statesmanship and devotion to Dharma. It exalts *moksha* as the supreme value and in a brief but pointed reference to *Māyā*, the poet hopes his king will be freed from its grip. The long description of Madurai City, and especially the sights and sounds and the gaiety of its night-life, grips the attention.

Porunar-āṟṟuppadai by Mudan-tāmak-kanniyar, *Siru-pān-ārrup-padai* by Nandattanar, and *Malai-padu-kadām* by Perum-Kausikanār celebrate the generosity to poets, singers and artistes of different rulers. Karikāl Cholan, the hero of *Pattinap-pālai*, is also the object of eulogy of *Porunar-āṟṟup-padai*. An itinerant bard, who accompanies himself on the *udukkai* or the little drum, is advised by another who had been to Karikāla and been honoured by him, to go to the same patron. The former and his singer-wife are resting in the shade of a tree after a weary trek, and the singer sings beautifully accompanying herself on the *yāzh*, which is described in some detail. The bard who had been to Karikāla describes the Chola country in which all the *tiṇais* are represented by tracts that are so near each other that men who live in one area, when satiated with its peculiar pleasures and amenities, go and live in the others for a change. The poet praises the bounty of the Kāveri to the Chola country as enthusiastically as the poet of *Pattinap-pālai* does.

In *Śirupān-ārrup-padai* the poet eulogizes a chieftain, Oymānāttu Nalliakkōdan, a great giver, who came after the 'last seven Vallals' or famous philanthropists of the Tamil country. It is a minstrel who plays on the *Śiriyāzh* (the small *yāzh*) that sends a brother in distress to him for succour. He has to pass the regions ruled over by the three big kings of the Tamil country, and they are all described, and also the towns in Kodan's principality.

Malai Padu-kadām, the second longest poem in *Pattu-p-pāttu*, is a eulogy of Nannan, one of the Velirs, who ruled over the mountain-tracts dominated by the hill 'Naviram', not far from modern Tiruvannamalai. The poem is also known as *Kūttar-ārrup-padai*, because a play-actor, who has benefited by Nannan's bounty, sends another of the tribe to him. The latter is the head of a troupe which contains musicians who play on many different instruments, which are all described. The rather peculiar title of the poem is derived from the comparison of the mountain range to elephants in rut. The Tamil's love of mountains expresses itself exuberantly in this poem, in which the strange and fascinating flora and fauna are described with loving detail. These actors have the *maddala* for their principal percussion instrument, and the actresses (*viraliyar*) are exhorted to sing and display their talents to a patron who is keen in appreciation and generous in reward.

GLOSSARY

[This is confined to the fauna and flora mentioned in these poems and left untranslated, as there is no exact equivalent in English. Other (more familiar) equivalents in Tamil and Sanskrit, and English words which correspond nearest, are given in brackets. The scientific name is given last in italics. This is compiled mainly from Dr. K. M. Nadkarni's *Indian Materia Medica*, though of course that authority must not be held responsible for any mistakes that may have crept into it.]

Adambu : (or Adumbu. Hare-leaf, a flowering creeper.)

Agatti : (or Atti) *Agatti Grandiflora.*

Ambal : Tāmarai (white) ; (Skt. Kamala ; Egyptian or sacred lotus) *Nelumbiam Speciosum.*

Alli-tāmarai or Vellāmbal ; (Skt. Kumudam. White water-lily) *Nymphaea lotus.*

Alli (Blue water-lily) *Nymphaea Pubescens.*

Anicham : A sensitive flowering plant.

Aśoka : (Aśoka tree) ; *Saraca Indica.*

Atiral : Wild jasmine.

Atti : (Skt. Udumbara-country fig) *Ficus Glomerata.*

Avarai : Field-bean.

Aśini : (Eerap-palā) : A species of jack-fruit.

Āvirai or *Āvārai* : (Matureta-tree or Tanner's Cassia) *Caisia Auriculata.*

Bakul : (Skt. Bakula. Tam. Vakula or Maghizha) *Mimusops Elenge.*

Bel : (Bilva or Vilva. Bengal quince.) *Aegle Marmelos.*

Bhittika : (Tamil 'Pichi'). A kind of jasmine.

Champak : (Golden or Yellow champa. Tam. Sampangi or Shenbagam). *Michelia Champaka.*

Eendu : *Mimosa Paniculata.*

Ganja : (Tam. Kanjā. Indian Hemp). *Cannabis Sativa.*

Inda : (or Indu : A thorny creeper). *Mimosa Rubicaulis.*

Indragopa : Insect of a bright scarlet colour, and velvety : like the cochineal insect seen at the commencement of the rains.

Irulvāsi : (Tam. Irul : Skt. Simśapā) *Xylia Dolabriformis.*

Jambu : (Rose-apple Tam. Nāgam or Nāval) *Eugenia Jambolana.*

Kadambu : (Vellai-Kadamba : Skt. Kadamba or Nīpa ; Wild Cinchona). *Anthocephalus Cadamba.*

Kalli : (Kombu-kalli and Tirugu-kalli Skt. Vajra-drumam. Eng. Milk-hedge. Indian Tree spurge). *Euphorbia Tirucalli.*

Kānchi : (also Aṟṟu-pūvarasu) : *River Portia.*

Kāya : (Kāyām-poovu-chedi. Skt. Anjani : Iron-wood tree). Dwarfish tree bearing purple flowers.

Karuvembu : (Skt. Krishna Nimba. Curry-leaf). *Bergira Koenigii.*

Karuvilai : (Karuvilai, Kākkattānkodi), (Butterfly pea or Mazerion) *Clitoria Ternatea.*

Ketaki : (Tam. Tāzhai, fragrant screw-pine) *Pandanus Odoratissimus.*

Kino : The Indian variety is called Vengai in Tamil.

Kokudi : A kind of *mullai.*

Kongam : One kind of silk cotton.

Konrai : (or Śarakkonnai. Indian Laburnum) *Cassia Fistula.*

Kumkuma : (Saffron) *Crocus Sativus.*

Kurukkatti : (Malayalam Mulla) Thistle.

Kurunda : (Lavangi-p-pattai) *Cinnamomum Cassia.*

Kutaja : (Veppalai) *Holarrhena Antidysentirica.*

Malligai : (Skt. Jāti Spanish Jasmine) *Jasminum Grandiflorum.*

Manjādi : (Anaikkundumani) *Adenanthera Pavonina.*

Maru : (-thōnri) or *Aivanam.* (Skt. Kuravaka. Henna, Samphire) *Lawsonia Alba.*

Marudu : (or Vellai-Marudamaram. Skt. Arjuna. Eng. Ariuna Myrobalan) *Terminalia Arjuna.*

Maruvaka : (Skt. Bush Basil) *Ocinum Minimum.*

Mullai : *Jasminum Tricotomum.* The Tamil Lexicon mentions half a dozen varieties of *mullai.*

Mulli : (Kari-mulli. Indian Nightshade) *Solanum Indicum.*

Musakkalai : The male of the black-faced monkey.

Nandi : (Nandiāvattai. Skt. Nandivṛksha) *Tabernaemontana Coronaria.*

Naravam : (Nārai-kāi or Jātikkai. Nutmeg) *Myristica Fragrans.*

Neidal : (A class of water-flowers) *Nymphae Alba.*

Nerinji : (Skt. Gokshura. Eng. Small Caltrop) *Tribulus Terrestris.*

Pālai : *Mimusops Hexandra.*

Palāsh : (Palāsām or Murukkamaram. Skt. Palāśā or Kimsuka Eng. Bastard Teak) *Butea frondosa.*

Pāngar : (Kalyāṇa-murungai ? Indian Coral Tree) *Erythrina Indica.*

Pārijāta : (Skt. for Pavazha-malligai, Eng. Night jasmine or Weeping Nyctanthes) *Nictanthes Arbor-Tristis.*

Pātala : (Skt. for Tamil Pādiri or Madana-kāmap-pū) *Stereospermum Suaveolens.*

Pidavu : (or Pidavam). Wild shrub bearing fragrant white flowers.

Poolai : (Ilavam, Red silk-cotton).

Punnaga : (same as Skt.) *Callitris Inophyllum.*

Śamba-berry : The berry of the Tamil *Kambu* or *semban-korai.*

Śēmbu : (Garden plant with esculent leaves and tubers) *Caladium Nymphae folium.*

Senkottuveri : (Malayalam for Śivappu-chitramūlam) *Plumbago Rosea.*

Serundi : (A flowering tree) *Ochna Squrrhosa.*

Seruvilai : White variety of *karuvilai.*

Sindhuvāram : (Skt. for Tamil Nīr-nochi and Eng. ' Five-leaved Chaste tree ') *Vitus Negundo.*

Śurap-punnai : (Alexandrian Laurel. ' Nāgappū' is also given as another Tam. equivalent) *Ochrocacgos Longifolius.*

Thumbai : (Skt. Drona-pushpa) *Lecuas Sephalores.*

Tilaka : (Skt. for Tamil ' Ilavanga ' ; country cinnamon) *Cinnamonium Malabathrum.*

Tillai : (Skt. Ugaru. Tiger's milk tree) *Ebcoecaria Agalureha.*

Vadavanam : (Skt. Vata & Eng. Banyan ? ?) *Ficus Bengalensis.*

Vākai : (Skt. Śirīsh') *Albizzia Labbek.*

Vālai : (A fish) *Tirchiurus lepturus.*

Valli : (A creeper with edible tuber) *Dioscoria Sativa.*

Vanji : A flowering creeper.

Vengai : (Indian Kino) *Pterocarpus Marsupium.*

Venthāli : or ' Ventazhai ', A variety of the fragrant screw-pine, with white flowers.

Vetchi : (or Vitchi, Skt. Banduka. Jungle Geranium) *Ixora coccinea.*

Vilavu : (Skt. Kapitth? Wood-apple) *Feronia Elephantum.*

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